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THE OLD HELMET.

THE OLD HELMET.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "WIDE, WIDE WORLD."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

"Nothing before, nothing behind :
The steps of Faith
Fall on the seeming void, and find
The rock beneath."

WHITTIER.



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NOTE TO THE READER.

The incidents and testimonies given in this work as matters of fact, are not drawn from imagination, but are reported from excellent authority—though I have used my own words. And in the cases of reported words of third parties, the words stand unchanged, without any meddling.

THE AUTHOR.



THE OLD HELMET.

CHAPTER I.

"She look'd and saw that all was ruinous,
Here stood a shattered archway plumed with fern;
And here had fall'n a great part of a tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers,
And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent,
Bare to the sun."

THE first thing noticeable is a gleam of white teeth. Now that is a pleasant thing generally; yet its pleasantness depends, after all, upon the way the lips part over the ivory. There is a world of character discoverable in the curve of those soft lines. In the present case, that of a lady, as it is undoubtedly the very first thing you notice, the matter must be investigated. The mouth is rather large, with well cut lips however; and in the smile which comes not infrequently, the lips part freely and frankly, though not too far, over a wealth of white, beautiful teeth. So free is the curve of the upper lip, and so ready its revelation of the treasures beneath, that there is an instant suspicion of a certain frankness and daring, and perhaps of a little mischief, on the part of their possessor; so free, at the same time, as to forbid the least notion of consciousness or design in that beautiful revelation. But how fine and full and regular are those white treasures of hers! seeming to speak for a

strong and perfect physical organization ; and if your eye goes further, for her flat hat is on the ground, you will see in the bountiful rich head of hair another token of the same thing. Her figure is finely developed ; her color clear and healthy ; not blonde ; the full brown hair and eyes agree with the notion of a nature more lively than we assign to the other extreme of complexion. The features are not those of a beauty, though better than that, perhaps ; there is a world of life and sense and spirit in them.

It speaks for her good nature and feeling, that her smile is as frank as ever just now, and as pleasant as ever ; for she is with about the last one of her party on whom she would have chosen to bestow herself. The occasion is a visit to some celebrated ruins ; a day of pleasure ; and Eleanor would a good deal rather be walking and talking with another much more interesting member of the company, in whose society indeed her day had begun ; but Mr. Carlisle had been obliged suddenly to return home for an hour or two ; and Eleanor is sitting on a grassy bank, with a gentleman beside her whom she knows very little and does not care about at all. That is, she has no idea he can be very interesting ; and he is a grave-looking personage, but we are not going to describe him at present.

A word must be given to the place where they are. It is a little paradise. If the view is not very extended, it is rich in its parts ; and the eye and the mind are filled. The grass is shaven smooth on the bank where the two are sitting ; so it is all around, under trees which stand with wilful wildness of luxuriance, grouped and scattered apparently as they would. They are very old, in several varieties of kind, and in the perfect development and thrift of each kind. Among them are the ruins of an old priory. They peep forth here and there from the trees. One broken tower stands free, with ivy masking

its sides and crumbling top, and stains of weather and the hues of lichen and moss enriching what was once its plain grey colour. Other portions of the ruins are seen by glimpses further on among the trees. Standing somewhat off by itself, yet encompassed by the congeners of those same trees, almost swallowed up among them, is a comfortable, picturesque little building, not in ruins; though it has been built up from the ruins. It is the parsonage, where the rector of the parish lives. Beyond this wood and these buildings, old and new, the eye can catch only bits of hills and woods that promise beauty further on; but nearer than they, and making a boundary line between the present and the distant, the flash of a little river is seen, which curves about the old priory lands. A somewhat doubtful sunlight is struggling over it all; casting a stray beam on the grass, and a light on the ivy of the old tower.

"What a queer old place it must have been," said Eleanor.

"How old is it?"

"O I don't know—ages! Do you mean really how old? I am sure I can't tell; I never can keep those things in my head. If Dr. Cairnes would come out, he could tell you all about it, and more."

"Dr. Cairnes, the rector?"

"Yes. He keeps it all in *his* head, I know. The ruins are instead of a family to him."

"They must date back pretty far, judging by those Norman arches."

"Norman arches?—what those round ones? O, they do. The priory was founded by some old courtier or soldier in the time of Henry the First, who got disgusted with the world. That is the beginning of all these places, isn't it?"

"Do you mean, that it is the beginning of all religious feeling?"

"I really think it is. I wouldn't tell Dr. Cairnes so, however. How sweet these violets are. Dear little blue things!"

"Do you suppose," said the young man, stooping to pick one or two, "that they are less sweet to me than to you?"

"Why should they be?"

"Because, religion is the most precious thing in the world to me; and by your rule, I must be disgusted with the world, and all sweet things have lost their savour."

He spoke with quiet gravity, and Eleanor's eye went to his face with a bright glance of inquiry. It came back with no change of opinion.

"You don't convert me," she said. "I do not know what you have given up for religion, so I cannot judge. But all the other people I ever saw, grew religious only because they had lost all care about everything else."

"I wonder how that discontented old soldier found himself, when he got into these solitudes?" said the young man, with a smile of his own then. It was sweet, and a little arch, and withal harmonized completely with the ordinary gravity of his face, not denying it at all. Eleanor looked, once and again, with some curiosity, but the smile passed away as quietly as it had come.

"The solitude was not *this* solitude then."

"O no, it was very wild."

"These were Augustine canons, were they not?"

"Who?"

"The monks of this priory."

"I am sure I don't know. I forget. What was the difference?"

"You know there were many orders of religious houses. The Augustines were less severe in their rule, and more genial in their allowed way of life, than most of the others?"

"What was their rule?"

"Beginning with discontent of the world, you know, they went on with the principle that nothing worldly was good."

"Well, isn't that the principle of all religious people now?"

"I like violets"—said the young man, smiling again.

"But do tell me, what did those old monks do? What was their 'rule'? I don't know anything about it, nor about them."

"Another old discontented soldier, who founded an abbey in Wales, is said by the historian to have dismissed all his former companions, and devoted himself to God. For his military belt, he tied a rope about his waist; instead of fine linen he put on haircloth. And it is recorded of him, that the massive suit of armour which he had been used to wear in battle, to protect him against the arrows and spears and axes of the enemy, he put on now and wore as a defence against the wiles and assaults of the devil—and wore it till it rusted away with age."

"Poor old soul!" said Eleanor.

"Does that meet your ideas of a religious life?"

Eleanor laughed, but answered by another question.

"Was *that* the rule of all the Augustine monks?"

"It gives the key to it. Is that your notion of a religious life? You don't answer me."

"Well," said Eleanor laughing again, "*it gives the key to it*, as you say. I do not suppose you wear a suit of armour to protect yourself."

"I beg your pardon. I do."

"*Armour?*" said Eleanor, looking incredulous. But her friend fairly burst into a little laugh at that.

"Are you rested?" said he.

And Eleanor got up, feeling a little indignant and a little curious. Strolling towards the ruins, however,

there was too much to start conversation and too much to give delight, to permit either silence or pique to last.

"Isn't it beautiful!" burst from both at once.

"How exquisite that ivy is, climbing up that old tower!"

"And what a pity it is crumbling away so!" said Eleanor. "See that nearer angle—it is breaking down fast. I wish it would stay as it is."

"Nothing will do that for you. What is all that collection of rubbish yonder?"

"That is where Mr. Carlisle is going to build a cottage for one of his people—somebody to take care of the ruins, I believe."

"And he takes the ruins to build it with, and the old priory grounds too!"

Eleanor looked again at her companion.

"I think it is better than to have the broken stones lying all over—don't you?"

"I do not."

"Mr. Carlisle thinks so. Now here we are in the body of the church—there you see where the roof went, by the slanting lines on the tower wall; and we are standing where the congregation used to assemble."

"Not much of a congregation," said her companion. "The neighbouring country furnished few attendants, I fancy; the old monks and their retainers were about all. The choir would hold most of them; the nave, where we are standing, would have been of little use except for processions."

"Processions?" said Eleanor.

"On particular days there were processions of the brotherhood, with lighted candles—round and round in the church. In the church at York twelve rounds made a mile, and there were twelve holes at the great door, with a little peg, so that any one curious about the matter might reckon the miles."

"And so they used to go up and down here, burning their fingers with melted tallow!" said Eleanor. "Poor creatures! What a melancholy existence! Are you preparing to renounce the world yourself, Mr. Rhys?"

He smiled, but it was a compound smile, light and earnest both at once, which Eleanor did not comprehend.

"Why do you suspect me?" he asked.

"You seem to be studying the thing. Are you going to be a white or a black monk—or a grey friar?"

"There is a prior question. It is coming on to rain, Miss Powle."

"Rain! It is beginning this minute! And all the umbrellas are nobody knows where—only that it is where we ought to be. I was glad just now that the old roof is gone—but I think I would like a piece of it back."

"You can take shelter at the parsonage."

"No, I cannot—they have got fever there."

"Then come with me. I believe I can find you a piece of roof somewhere."

Eleanor smiled to herself that he should think so, as all traces of beam and rafter had long since disappeared from the priory and its dependencies. However she followed her conductor, who strode along among the ruins at a pace which it taxed her powers to keep up with. Presently he plunged down into a wilderness of bushes and wild thorn and piled up stones which the crumbling walls had left in confusion strewn over the ground. It was difficult walking. Eleanor had never been there; for in that quarter the decay of the buildings was more entire, and the growth of shrubs and brambles had been allowed to mask the disorder. As they went on, the footing grew very rough; they were obliged to go over heaps and layers of the crumbling, moss-grown ruins. Eleanor's conductor turned and gave her his hand to help; it was a strong hand and quickened her progress. Presently turning a sharp

corner, through a thicket of thorn and holly bushes, with young larches and beeches, a small space of clearance was gained, bounded on the other side by a thick wall, one angle of which was standing. On this clear spot the rain drops were falling fast. The hand that held Eleanor's hurried her across it, to where an old window remained sunk in the wall. The arch over the window was still entire, and as the wall was one of the outer walls and very thick, the shelter of a "piece of roof" was literally afforded. Eleanor's conductor seated her on the deep window sill, where she was perfectly screened from the rain; and apologizing for the necessity of the occasion, took his place beside her. The window was narrow as well as deep; and the two, who hardly knew each other, were brought into very familiar neighbourhood. Eleanor would have been privately amused, if the first passing consciousness of amusement had not been immediately chased away by one or two other thoughts. The first was the extreme beauty of her position as a point of view.

The ruins were all behind them. As they looked out of the window, nothing was seen but the most exquisite order and the most dainty perfection of nature. The ground, shaven and smooth, sloped away down to a fringe of young wood, amidst which peeped out a pretty cottage and above which a curl of smoke floated. The cottage stood so low, and the trees were so open, that above and beyond appeared the receding slopes and hills of the river valley, in their various shades of colour, grass and foliage. There was no sun on all this now, but a beautiful light under the rain cloud from the distant horizon. And the dark old stone window was the frame for this picture. It was very perfect. It was very rare. Eleanor exclaimed in delight.

"But I never was here—I never saw this before! How did you know of it, Mr. Rhys?"

"I have studied the ruins," he said lightly.

"But you have been at Wiglands only a few months."

"I come here very often," he answered. "Happily for you."

He might add that well enough, for the clouds poured down their rain now in torrents, or in sheets; the light which had come from the horizon a few minutes before was hidden, and the grey gloom of a summer storm was over everything. The little window seemed dark, with the two people sitting there. Then there came a blinding flash of lightning. Eleanor started and cowered, and the thunder rolled its deep tones over them, and under them, for the earth shook. She raised her head again, but only to shrink back the second time, when the lightning and the thunder were repeated. This time her head was not raised again, and she kept her hand covered over her eyes. Yet whenever the sound of the thunder came, Eleanor's frame answered it by a start. She said nothing; it was merely the involuntary answer of the nerves. The storm was a severe one, and when the severity of it passed a little further off, the torrents of rain still fell.

"You do not like thunder storms"—Mr. Rhys remarked, when the lightnings had ceased to be so vivid or so near.

"Does anybody like them?"

"Yes. I like everything."

"You are happy"—said Eleanor.

"Why are not you?"

"I can't help it," said the girl, lifting up her head, though she did not let her eyes go out of the window. "I cannot bear to see the lightning. It is foolish, but I cannot help it."

"Are you sure it is foolish? Is there not some reason at the bottom of it?"

"I think there is a reason, though still it is foolish. There was a man killed by lightning just by our door, once—when I was a child. I saw him—I never can forget it, never!"

And a sort of shudder ran over Eleanor's shoulders as she spoke.

"You want my armour," said her companion. The tone of voice was not only grave but sympathizing. Eleanor looked up at him.

"Your armour?"

"You charged me with wearing armour—and I confessed it," he said with something of a smile. "It is a sort of armour that makes people safe in all circumstances."

He looked so quiet, so grave, so cool, and his eye had such a light in it, that Eleanor could not throw off his words. He *looked* like a man in armour. But no mail of brass was to be seen.

"What *do* you mean?" she said.

"Did you never hear of the helmet of salvation?"

"I don't know," said Eleanor wonderingly. "I think I have heard the words. I do not think I ever attached any meaning to them."

"Did you never feel," he said, speaking with a peculiar deliberation of manner, "that you were exposed to danger—and to death—from which no effort of yours could free you; and that after death, there is a great white throne to meet, for which you are not ready?"

While he spoke slowly, his eyes were fixed upon Eleanor with a clear piercing glance which she felt read her through and through; but she was fascinated instead of angered, and submitted her own eyes to the reading without wishing to turn them away. Carrying on two trains of thought at the same time, as the mind will, her inward reflection was, "I had no idea that you were so

good-looking!"—the answer in words was a sober, "I have felt so."

"Was the feeling a happy one?"

Eleanor's lip suddenly trembled; then she put down that involuntary natural answer, and said evasively, looking out of the window, "I suppose everybody has such feelings sometimes."

"Not with that helmet on"—said her companion.

With all the quietness of his speech, and it was very unimpassioned, his accent had a clear ring to it, which came from some unsounded spirit-depth of power; and Eleanor's heart for a moment sunk before it in a secret convulsion of pain. She concealed this feeling, as she thought, successfully; but that single ray of light had shewed her the darkness; it was keen as an arrow, and the arrow rankled. And her neighbour's next words made her feel that her heart lay bare; so quietly they touched it.

"You feel that you want something, Miss Powle."

Eleanor's head drooped, as well as her heart. She wondered at herself; but there was a spell of power upon her, and she could by no means lift up either. It was not only that his words were true, but that he knew them to be so.

"Do you know *what* you want?" her friend went on, in tones that were tender, along with that deliberate utterance that carried so much force with it. "You know yourself an offender before the Lord—and you want the sense of forgiveness in your heart. You know yourself inclined to be an offender again—and you want the renewing grace of God to make your heart clean, and set it free from the power of sin. Then you want also something to make you happy; and the love of Jesus alone can do that."

"What is the use of telling over the things one has not got?"—said Eleanor in somewhat smothered tones.

The words of her companion came again clear as a bell—

“Because you may have them if you want them.”

Eleanor struggled with herself, for her self-possession was endangered, and she was angry at herself for being such a fool; but she could not help it; yet she would not let her agitation come any more to the surface. She waited for clearness of voice, and then could not forbear the question,

“How, Mr. Rhys?”

“Jesus said, ‘If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.’ There is all fulness in him. Go to him for light—go to him for strength—go to him for forgiveness, for healing, for sanctification. ‘Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.’”

“‘Go to him?’” repeated Eleanor vaguely.

“Ask him.”

Ask *Him*! It was such a far-off, strange idea to her heart, there seemed such a universe of distance between, Eleanor’s face grew visibly shadowed with the thought. *She?* She could not. She did not know how. She was silent a little while. The subject was getting unmanageable.

“I never had anybody talk to me so before, Mr. Rhys,” she said, thinking to let it pass.

“Perhaps you never will again,” he said. “Hear it now. The Lord Jesus is not far off—as you think—he is very near; he can hear the faintest whisper of a petition that you send to him. It is his message I bring you to-day—a message to *you*. I am his servant, and he has given me this charge for you to-day—to tell you that he loves you—that he has given his life for yours—and that he calls Eleanor Powle to give him her heart, and then to give him her life; in all the obedience his service may require.”

Eleanor felt her heart strangely bowed, subdued, bent

to his words. "I will"—was the secret language of her thoughts—"but I must not let this man see all I am feeling; if I can help it." She held herself still, looking out of the window, where the rain fell in torrents yet, though the thunder and the lightning were no longer near. So did he; he added no more to his last words, and a silence lasted in the old ruined window as if its chance occupants were gone again. As the silence lasted, Eleanor felt it grow awkward. She was at a loss how to break it. It was broken for her then.

"What will you do, Miss Powle?"

"I will think about it"—she answered, startled and hesitating.

"How long, before you decide?"

"How can I tell?" she said.

"You are shrinking from a decision already formed. The answer is given in your secret thoughts, and something is rising up in the midst of them to thwart it. Shall I tell my Master that his message is refused?"

"Mr. Rhys!" said Eleanor looking up, "I never heard any one talk so in all my life! You speak as if——"

"As if, what?"

"You speak as if—I never heard any one speak as you do."

"I speak as if I were in the habit of telling my Master how his message is received? I often do that."

"But it seems superfluous to tell what is known already," said Eleanor, wondering secretly much more than she dared to say at her companion's talk.

"Do you never, in speaking to those you love, tell them what is no information?"

Eleanor was now dumb. There was too great a gulf of difference between her companion and herself, to try to frame any words or thoughts that might bridge it over. She must remain on one side and he on the other; yet she went on wondering.

"Are you a clergyman, Mr. Rhys?" she said after a pause.

"I am not what you would call such?"

"Do you not think the rain is over?"

"Nearly, for the present; but the grass is as wet as possible."

"O, I don't mind that. There is somebody now in the shrubbery yonder, looking for me."

"He will not find you here," said Mr. Rhys. "I have this window all to myself. But we will find him."

The rain-drops fell now but scatteringly, the last of the shower; the sun was breaking out, and the green world was all in a glitter of wet leaves. Wet as they were, Eleanor and Mr. Rhys pushed through the thick bramble and holly bushes, which with honeysuckles, eglantine, and broom, and bryony, made a sweet wild wilderness. They got plentifully besprinkled in their way, shook that off as well as they could, and with quick steps sought to rejoin their companions. The person Eleanor had seen in the shrubbery was the first one found, as Mr. Rhys had said. It was Mr. Carlisle. He at once took charge of Eleanor.

"What has become of you?"

"What has become of *you*, Mr. Carlisle?" Eleanor's gleaming smile was as bright as ever.

"Despair, nearly," said he; "for I feared business would hold me all day; but I broke away. Not time enough to protect you from this shower."

"Water will wet," said Eleanor, laughing; for the politeness of this speech was more evident than its plausibility. She was on the point of speaking of the protection that had been actually found for her, but thought better of it. Meantime they were joined by a little girl, bright and rather wild looking, who addressed Eleanor as her sister.

"O come!" she said,—*"where have you been? We*

can't go on till you come. We are going to lunch at Barton's Tower—and mamma says she will make Mr. Carlisle build a fire, so that we may all dry ourselves."

"Julia!—how you speak!"

"She did say so," repeated the child. "Come—make haste."

Eleanor glanced at her companion, who met the glance with a smile. "I hope Mrs. Powle will always command me," he said, somewhat meaningly; and Eleanor hurried on.

She was destined to long *tête-à-têtes* that day; for as soon as her little party was seen in the distance, the larger company took up their line of march again. Julia and Mr. Rhys had fallen behind; and the long walk to Barton's Tower was made with Mr. Carlisle alone, who was in no haste to abridge it, and seemed to enjoy himself very well. Eleanor once or twice looked back, and saw her little sister, hand in hand with her companion of the old window, walking and talking in very eager and gay style; to judge by Julia's lively movements.

"Who is that Mr. Rhys?" said Eleanor.

"I have hardly the honour to know him. May I ask, why you ask?"

"He is peculiar," said Eleanor.

"He can hardly be worthy your study." And the question was dismissed with a coolness which reminded Eleanor of Mr. Rhys's own words, that he was not what she would call a clergyman. She would have asked another question, but the slight disdain which spoke in Mr. Carlisle's eye and voice deterred her. She only noticed how well the object of it and her sister were getting along. However, Eleanor's own walk was pleasant enough to drive Mr. Rhys out of her head. Mr. Carlisle was polished, educated, spirited, and had the great additional advantage of being a known and ascer-

tained somebody; as he was in fact the heir of all the fine domain whose beauties they were admiring. And a beautiful heirdom it was. The way taken by the party led up the course of a valley which followed the windings of a small stream; its sides most romantic and woody in some places; in others taking the very mould of gentle beauty, and covered with rich grass, and sweet with broom; in others again, drawing near together, and assuming a picturesque wildness, rocky and broken. Sweet flowers grew by the way in profusion, on the banks and along the sides of the stream; and the birds were very jocund in their solitudes. Through all this it was very pleasant wandering with the heir of the land; and neither wet shoes nor wet shoulders were much remembered by Eleanor till they reached Barton's Tower.

This was a ruin of a different character; one of the old strongholds of the rough time when men lived by the might of hand. No delicate arches and graceful mouldings had ever been here; all was, or had been, grim, stern strength and massiveness. The strength was broken long ago; and grace, in the shape of clustering ivy, had mantled so much of the harsh outlines that their original impression was lost. It could be recalled only by a little abstraction. Within the enclosure of the thick walls, which in some places gave a sort of crypt-like shelter, the whole rambling party was now collected.

"Shall we have a fire?" Mr. Carlisle had asked Eleanor, just before they entered. And Eleanor could not find in her heart to deny that it would be good, though not quite prepared to have it made to *her* order. However, the word was given. Wood was brought, and presently a roaring blaze went up within the old walls; not where the old chimney used to be, for there were no traces of such a thing. The sun had not shined bright enough to do away the mischief the shower had

done; and now the ladies gathered about the blaze, and declared it was very comfortable. Eleanor sat down on a stone by the side of the fire, willing to be less in the foreground for a little while; as well as to dry her wet shoes. From there she had a view of the scene that would have pleased a painter.

The blazing fire threw a warm light and colour of its own upon the dark walls and on the various groups collected within them, and touched mosses and ferns and greensward with its gypsy glare. The groups were not all of one character. There was a light-hued gay company of muslins and scarfs around the burning pile; in a corner a medley of servants and baskets and hampers; and in another corner Eleanor watched Julia and Mr. Rhys; the latter of whom was executing some adventurous climbing, after a flower probably, or a fern, while Julia stood below eagerly following his progress. Mr. Carlisle was all about. It was a singularly pretty scene, and to Eleanor's eye it had the sharp painting which is given by a little secret interest at work. That interest gave particular relief to the figures of the two gentlemen whose names have been mentioned; the other figures, the dark walls and ivy, the servants and the preparing collation, were only a rich mosaic of background for those two.

There was Mr. Powle, a sturdy, well-to-do, country gentleman; looking it, and looking besides good-natured, which he was if not crossed. There was Eleanor's mother, good-natured under all circumstances; fair and handsome; every inch of her, from the close fair curls on each side of her temples, to the tips of her neat walking shoes, shewing the ample perfection of abundant means and indulgent living. There were some friends that formed part of their household just then, and the young people of a neighbouring family; with the Miss Broadus's; two elderly ladies from the village who were

always in everything. There was Dr. Cairnes the rector, and his sister, a widow lady who spent part of every year with him. All these Eleanor's eye passed over with slight heed, and busied itself furtively with the remaining two; the great man of the party, and the other, the one certainly of least consideration in it. Why did she look at him, Eleanor asked herself? Mr. Carlisle was a mark for everybody's eyes; a very handsome man, the future lord of the manor, knowing and using gracefully his advantages of many kinds. What had the other,—that tall, quiet man, gathering flowers with Julia in the angle of the old tower? He could not be called handsome; a dark thick head of hair, and somewhat marked features alone distinguished him; except a pair of very clear keen eyes, the penetrating quality of which Eleanor had felt that morning. "He has a good figure, though," she said to herself, "a very good figure—and he moves well and easily; but what is there about him to make me think of him? What is the difference between his face and that other face?"

"That other face" made frequent appeals for her attention; yet Eleanor could not forget the group in the corner, where her sister seemed to be having a time of more lively enjoyment than any one else of the company. No other person paid them any attention, even in thought; and when the collation was spread, Eleanor half wondered that her morning's friend neither came forward nor was for some moments asked to do so. She thought indeed she heard Julia ask him, but if so it was without effect. Mr. Rhys remained in the distant angle, studying the stones there; till Mr. Powle shouted to him and brought him into the company. Having done this good action, the squire felt benevolently disposed towards the object of his care, and entered into conversation with him. It grew so satisfactory to Mr. Powle, that it absorbed his attention from all but the

meats and wines which were offered him, the enjoyment of which it probably heightened ; the talk was prolonged, and seemed to grow more interesting as it went on. Eleanor could not hear what it was about, her own ear was so much engaged with business nearer at hand. The whole play had not escaped her, however ; and between question and answer of the rattling gayety going on about her ears, and indeed on her own tongue, she found time to wonder whether Mr. Rhys were shy, or kept back by a feeling of inferiority ; so marked his conduct was by the absence of all voluntary self-assertion. She could not determine that he was either. No look or word favoured the one or the other supposition. And Eleanor could not look at those keen eyes, without feeling that it was extremely unlikely they would quail before anybody or anything. Very different from those fine hazel irids that were flashing fun and gallantry into hers with every glance. Very different ; but what was the difference ? It was something deeper than colour and contour. Eleanor had no chance to make further discoveries ; for her father engrossed his new acquaintance all the way home, and only did not bring him to Ivy Lodge to tea because Mr. Rhys refused it ; for the invitation was given.

CHAPTER II.

"To die—to sleep.

To sleep! perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come"—

THE family at Ivy Lodge gathered round the tea-table with spirits rather whetted, apparently, for both talking and eating. Certainly the one exercise had been intermitted for some hours; the other however had gone on without cessation. It went on still. The party was now reduced to the home party, with the addition of Miss Broadus; which lady, with her sister, was at home at Ivy Lodge, as she was everywhere else. Elderly, respectable and respected old ladies they were; and though they dealt in gossip, would not willingly have hurt a fly. They dealt in receipts and in jellies too; in fashions, and in many kindnesses, both received and given by all the neighbourhood. They were daughters of a former rector of the parish, and poor, and asked nobody to help them; which indeed they had no need to ask.

"You seemed to like your afternoon's acquaintance, papa?" said Eleanor.

"He is a fine fellow," said the squire. "He's a fine fellow. Knows something. My dear, he teaches a small school at Wiglands, I hear."

"Does he. I wonder who goes to it," said Mrs. Powle.

"I don't know," said the squire; "but I mean to send Alfred."

"My dear Mr. Powle! to such a school as that? Nobody can go to it but some of the farmers' children around—there is no one else."

"It won't hurt him, for a little while," said the squire. "I like the master, and that's of more importance than the children. Don't *you* worry."

"My dear Mr. Powle! But I never heard of such a thing in my life. I do not believe Dr. Cairnes will like it at all. He will think it very strange, your sending your boy to a man that is not a Churchman, and is not anything, that anybody knows of."

"Dr. Cairnes be hanged!" said the squire,—“and mind his own affairs. He wouldn't want me to send Alfred to *him*."

"My dear Mrs. Powle," said Miss Broadus, "I can tell you this for your comfort—there are two sons of Mr. Churchill, the Independent minister of Eastcombe—that come over to him; besides one or two more that are quite respectable."

"Why does not Mr. Churchill send his boys to school at Eastcombe?"

"O well, it doesn't suit him, I suppose; and like goes to like, you know, my dear."

"That is what I think," said Mrs. Powle, looking at her husband,—“and I wonder Mr. Powle does not think so too."

"If you mean me," said the squire, "I am not 'like' anybody—that I can tell you. A good schoolmaster is a good schoolmaster—I don't care what else he calls himself."

"And Mr. Rhys is a good schoolmaster, I have no doubt," said Miss Broadus.

"I know what he is," said Julia; "he is a nice man, I like him."

"I saw he kept you quiet," said Eleanor. "How did he manage it?"

"He didn't manage it. He told me about things," said Julia; "and he got flowers for me, and told me about ferns. You never saw such lovely ferns as we found; and you would not know where to look for them, either. I never saw such a nice man as Mr. Rhys in my life."

"There, my dear," said her mother, "do not encourage Julia in talking. She is always too ready."

"I am going to walk with him again, to get flowers," said the child.

"I shall invite him to the Lodge," said the squire. "He is a very sensible man, and knows what he is about."

"Do you know anything more about him, Mr. Powle?"

"He does more than teach three or four boys," said Miss Broadus. "He serves a little Dissenting Chapel of some sort, over at Lily Vale."

"Why does he not live there then?" said Mrs. Powle. "Lily Vale is two and a half miles off. Not very convenient, I should think."

"I don't know, my dear. Perhaps he finds living cheap at Wiglands, and I am sure he may. Do you know, I get butter for less than one-half what I paid when I was in Leicester?"

"It is summer time now, Miss Broadus," said the squire.

"Yes, I know, but still—I am sure Wiglands is the nicest, easiest place for poor people to live, that ever was."

"Why you are not poor, Miss Broadus," said the squire.

Miss Broadus chuckled. The fact was, that the Miss Broadus's not being poor was a standing pleasant joke

with them; it being well known that they were not largely supplied with means, but contrived to make a little do the apparent work of much more than they had. A way of achieving respectability upon which they prided themselves.

"Eleanor," said her mother as they left the table, 'you look pale. Did you get your feet wet?'

"Yes, mamma—there was no helping that."

"Then you'll be laid up!"

"She must not, just now, my dear," said Miss Broadus smilingly.

Eleanor could not laugh off the prophecy, which an internal warning told her was well founded. She went to bed thinking of Mr. Rhys's helmet. She did not know why; she was not given to such thoughts; neither did she comprehend exactly what the helmet might be; yet now the thought came uneasily across her mind, that just such a cold as she had taken had been many a one's death; and with that came a strange feeling of unprotectedness—of want of defence. It was very uncomfortable to go to bed with that slight sensation of sore throat and feverishness, and to remember that the beginning of multitudes of last sicknesses had been no other and no greater; and it was most unlike Eleanor to have such a cause make her uncomfortable. She charged it upon the conversation of the morning, and supposed herself nervous or feverish; but this, if an explanation, was no cure; and through the frequent wakings of a disturbed night, the thought of that piece of armour which made one of her fellow creatures so blessedly calm, came up again and again to her mind.

"I am feverish—this is nightmare," said Eleanor to herself. But it must be good to have no such nightmare. And when the broad daylight had come, and she was pronounced to be very ill, and the doctor was sent for, Eleanor found her night's visions would not take their

departure. She could not get up ; she was a prisoner ; would she ever be free ?

She was very ill ; the fever gained head ; and the old doctor, who was a friend of the family, looked very grave at her. Eleanor saw it. She knew that a battle was to be fought between the powers of life and death ; and the thought that no one could tell how the victory would be, came like an ice wind upon flowers. Her spirit shrank and cowered before it. Hopes and pleasures and plans, of which she was so full yesterday, were chilled to the ground ; and across the cleared pathway of vision, what appeared ? Eleanor would not look.

But the battle must be fought ; and it had to be fought amid pain and fever and weariness and the anxious looks of friends ; and it was not soon decided. And the wish for that helmet of shelter, whatever it might be, came at times bitterly strong over Eleanor's heart. Many a heavily drawn sigh, which her mother charged to the body's weariness, came from the mind's longing. And in the solitude of the night, when her breath was quick and her pulse was high and she knew everything was going wrong, the thought came with a sting of agony,—if there *was* such a helmet, and she could not have it. O to be well and strong, and need none !—or while lying before death's door to see if it would open, O to have that talisman that would make its opening peace ! It was not at Eleanor's hand, and she did not know where to find it. And when the daylight came again, and the doctor looked grave, and her mother turned away the anxious face she did not wish Eleanor to read, the cold chill of fear crept over Eleanor's heart. She hid it there. No creature in the house, she knew, could meet or quiet it ; if indeed her explanation of it could have been understood. She banished it as often as it was possible ; but during many days that Eleanor

lay on a sick bed, it was so frequent a visiter that her heart grew sore for its coming.

There were June roses and summer sunshine outside; and sweet breaths came in at the open windows, telling the time of year. Julia reported how fine the strawberries were, and went and came with words about walks and flowers and joyous doings; while Eleanor's room was darkened, and phials of medicine and glasses stood on the table, and the doctor went and came, and Mrs. Powle hardly left her by day, and at night the nurse slept, and Eleanor tossed and turned on her pillow and thought of another "night" that "cometh."

The struggle with fever and pain was over at last. Then came weakness; and though hope revived, fear would not die. Besides, Eleanor said to herself, though she should get entirely well of this sickness, who would guaranty her that another would not come? And must not one come—some time—that must be final? And how should that be met? Nay, though getting well again and out of present danger, she would have liked to have that armour of shelter still!

"What are you crying for?" said her little sister coming suddenly into her room one day. Eleanor was so far recovered as to be up.

"I am weak and nervous,—foolish."

"I wouldn't be foolish," said Julia.

"I do not think I am foolish," said Eleanor slowly.

"Then why do you say you are? But what is the matter with you?"

"Like all the rest of the world, child,—I want some thing I cannot get. What have you there?"

"Ferns," said Julia. "Do you know what ferns are?"

"I suppose I do—when I see them."

"No, but when you *don't* see them; that's the thing."

"Do you, pray."

"Yes! A fern, is a plant which has its seeds come on the back of the leaf, and no flower; and it comes up curled like a caterpillar. Aren't those pretty?"

"Where did you learn all that?"

"I know more than that. This leaf is called a *frond*."

"Who told you?"

"Mr. Rhys."

"Did you learn it from Mr. Rhys?"

"Yes, to be sure I did, and a great deal more. He is going to teach me all about ferns."

"Where do you see Mr. Rhys?"

"Why! wherever I have a mind. Alfred goes walking with him, and the other boys, and I go too; and he tells us things. I always go along with Mr. Rhys, and he takes care of me."

"Does mamma know?"

"Yes, but papa lets Mr. Rhys do just what he pleases. Papa says Mr. Rhys is a wonderful man."

"What is he wonderful for?" said Eleanor languidly.

"Well, I think, because he is making Alfred a good boy."

"I wonder how he has done it," said Eleanor.

"So do I. He knows how. What do you think—he punished Alfred one day right before papa."

"Where?" said Eleanor, in astonishment.

"Down at the school. Papa was there. Papa told about it. Alfred thought he wouldn't dare, when papa was there; and Alfred took the opportunity to be impudent; and Mr. Rhys just took him up by his waistband and laid him down on the floor at his feet; and Alfred has behaved himself ever since."

"Was not papa angry?"

"He said he was at first, and I think it is likely; but after that, he said Mr. Rhys was a great man, and he would not interfere with him."

"And how does Alfred like Mr. Rhys?"

"He likes him—" said Julia, turning over her ferns. "I like him. Mr. Rhys said he was sorry you were sick. Now, *that* is a frond. That is what it is called. Do you see, those are the seeds."

Eleanor sighed. She would have liked to take lessons of Mr. Rhys on another subject. She half envied Julia's liberty. There seemed a great wall built up between her and the knowledge she wanted. Must it be so always?

"Julia, when are you going to take a walk with Mr. Rhys again?"

"To-morrow," was the quick answer.

"I will give you something to ask him about."

"I don't want it. I always have enough to ask him. We are going after ferns; we always have enough to talk about."

"But there is a question I would like you to ask."

"What is it? Why don't you ask him yourself?"

Eleanor was silent, watching Julia's uncompromising business-like air as she turned over her bunch of ferns. The little one was full of her own affairs; her long locks of hair waving with every turn of her busy head. Suddenly she looked up.

"What is your question, Eleanor?"

"You must not ask it as if from me."

"How then?"

"Just ask it—as if you wanted to know yourself; without saying anything."

"As if I wanted to know what?"

Eleanor hesitated, and Mrs. Powle came into the room.

"What, Eleanor—what?" Julia repeated.

"Nothing. Study your ferns."

"I *have* studied them. This is the rachis—and down here below this, is the rhizoma; and the little seed places

that come on the back of the frond, are there. I forget what Mr. Rhys called the seeds now. I'll ask him."

"What nonsense is that you are talking, Julia?"

"Sense, mamma. Or rather, it is knowledge."

"Mamma, how do *you* like Mr. Rhys? Julia says he is often here."

"He is a pleasant man," said Mrs. Powle. "I have nothing against him—except that your father and the children are crazy about him. I see nothing in him to be crazy about."

"Alfred is a good deal less crazy than he used to be," remarked Julia; "and *I* think papa hasn't lost anything."

"You are a saucy girl," said her mother. "Mr. Carlisle is very anxious to know when you will be down stairs again, Eleanor."

Julia ran off with her ferns; Eleanor went into a muse; and the conversation ceased.

It happened a few days after this, that the event about which Mr. Carlisle was anxious came to pass. Eleanor was able to leave her room. However, feeling yet very wanting in strength, and not quite ready to face a company of gay talkers, she shunned the drawing-room where such a company was gathered, and betook herself to a small summer-parlour in another part of the house. This room she had somewhat appropriated to her own use. It had once been a school-room. Since the misbehaviour of one governess, years ago, Mr. Powle had vowed that he would never have another in the house, come what would. Julia might run wild at home; he should be satisfied if she learned to read, to ride, and to walk; and when she was old enough, he would send her to boarding-school. What the squire considered old enough, did not appear. Julia was a fine child of eleven, and still practising her accomplishments of riding and walking to her heart's content at home; with little pro-

gress made in the other branches to which reading is the door. The old schoolroom had long forgotten even its name, and had been fitted up simply and pleasantly for summer occupation. It opened on one side by a glass door upon a gay flower-garden; Eleanor's special pet and concern; where she did a great deal of work herself. It was after an elaborate geometrical pattern; and beds of all sorts of angles were filled and bright with different colored verbenas, phloxes, geraniums, heliotrope, and other flowers fit for such work; making a brilliant mosaic of scarlet, purple and gold, in Eastern gorgeousness, as the whole was seen from the glass door. Eleanor sat down there to look at it and realize the fact that she was getting well again; with the dreamy realization that goes along with present weakness and remembered past pain.

On another side the room opened to a small lawn; it was quite shut off by its situation and by the plantations of shrubbery, from the other part of the house; and very rarely visited by the chance comers who were frequent there. So Eleanor was a good deal surprised this evening to see a tall strange figure appear at the further side of her flower garden; then not at all surprised to see that it was Mr. Rhys accompanied by her sister Julia. Julia flitted about through the garden, in very irregular fashion, followed by her friend; till their wanderings brought them near the open door within which Eleanor sat. To the door Julia immediately darted, drawing her companion with her; and as soon as she came up exclaimed, as if she had been armed with a search warrant and had brought her man,—

"Here's Mr. Rhys, Eleanor. Now you can ask him yourself whatever you like."

Eleanor felt startled. But it was with such a pleasant face that Mr. Rhys came up, such a cordial grasp of the hand greeted her, that the feeling vanished immediately.

Perhaps that hand-clasp was all the warmer for Eleanor's changed appearance. She was very unlike the girl of superb health who had wandered over the old priory grounds a few weeks before. Eleanor's colour was gone; the blue veins shewed distinctly on the temples; the full lips, instead of their brilliant gay smile, had a languid and much soberer line. She made quite a different impression now, of a fair delicate young creature, who had lost and felt she had lost the proud strength in which she had been so luxuriant a little while before. Mr. Rhys looked at her attentively.

"You have been very ill, Miss Powle."

"I suppose I have—some of the time."

"I am rejoiced to see you well again."

"Thank you."

"Julia has been leading me over the garden and grounds. I did not know where she was bringing me."

"How do you like my garden?"

"For a garden of that sort—it seems to me well arranged."

He was very cool, certainly, in giving his opinion, Eleanor thought. Her gardening pride was touched. This was a pet of her own.

"Then you do not fancy gardens of this sort."

"I believe I think Nature is the best artist of all."

"But would you let Nature have her own way entirely?"

"No more in the vegetable than I would in the moral world. She would grow weeds."

The quick clear sense and decision, in the eye and accent, were just what Eleanor did not want to cope with. She was silent. So were her two companions; for Julia was busy with a nosegay she was making up. Then Mr. Rhys turned to Eleanor,

"Julia said you had a question to ask of me, Miss Powle."

"Yes, I had,"—said Eleanor colouring slightly and hesitating. "But you cannot answer it standing—will you come in, Mr. Rhys?"

"Thank you—if you will allow me, I will take this instead," said he, sitting down on one of the steps before the glass door. "What was the question?"

"That was the other day, when she brought in her ferns—it was a wish I had. But she ought not to have troubled you with it."

"It will give me great pleasure to answer you—if I can."

Eleanor half fancied he knew what the question was; and she hesitated again, feeling a good deal confused. But when should she have another chance? She made a bold push.

"I felt a curiosity to ask you—I did not know any one else who could tell me—what that 'helmet' was, you spoke of one day;—that day at the old priory?"

Eleanor could not look up. She felt as if the clear eyes opposite her were reading down in the depth of her heart. They were very unflinching about it. It was curiously disagreeable and agreeable both at once.

"Have you wanted it, these weeks past?" said he.

The question was unexpected. It was put with a penetrating sympathy. Eleanor felt if she opened her lips to speak she could not command their steadiness. She gave no answer but silence.

"A helmet?" said Julia looking up. "What is a helmet?"

"The warriors of old time," said Mr. Rhys, "used to wear a helmet to protect their heads from danger. It was a covering of leather and steel. With this head-piece on, they felt safe; where their lives would not have been worth a penny without it."

"But Eleanor—what does Eleanor want of a hel-

met?" said Julia. And she went off into a shout of ringing laughter.

"Perhaps you want one," said Mr. Rhys composedly.

"No, I don't. What should I want it for? What should I cover my head with leather and steel for, Mr. Rhys?"

"You want something stronger than that."

"Something stronger? What do I want, Mr. Rhys?"

"To know that, you must find out first what the danger is."

"I am not in any danger."

"How do you know that?"

"Am I, Mr. Rhys?"

"Let us see. Do you know what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us all?"

"No."

"Do you know whether God has given us any commandments?"

"Yes; I know the ten commandments. I have learned them once, but I don't remember them."

"Have you obeyed them?"

"Me?"

"Yes. You."

"I never thought about it."

"Have you disobeyed them then?"

Eleanor breathed more freely, and listened. It was curious to her to see the wayward, giddy child stand and look into the eyes of her questioner as if fascinated. The ordinary answer from Julia would have been a toss and a fling. Now she stood and said sedately, "I don't know."

"We can soon tell," said her friend. "One of the commandments is, to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Have you always done that?"

"No," said Julia bluntly. "I don't think anybody else does."

"Never mind anybody else. Have you always honoured the word and wish of your father and mother? That is another command."

"I have done it more than Alfred has."

"Let Alfred alone. Have *you* always done it?"

"No, sir."

"Have you loved the good God all your life, with all your heart?"

"No."

"You have loved to please yourself, rather than anything else?"

The nod with which Julia answered this, if not polite, was at least significant, accompanied with an emphatic "Always!" Mr. Rhys could not help smiling at her, but he went on gravely enough.

"What is to keep you then from being afraid?"

"From being afraid?"

"Yes. You want a helmet."

"Afraid?" said Julia.

"Yes. Afraid of the justice of God. He never lets a sin go unpunished. He is *perfectly* just."

"But I can't help it," said Julia.

"Then what is to become of you? You need a helmet."

"A helmet?" said Julia again. "What sort of a helmet?"

"You want to know that God has forgiven you; that he is not angry with you; that he loves you, and has made you his child."

"How can I?" said the child, pressing closer to the speaker where he sat on the step of the door. And no wonder, for the words were given with a sweet earnest utterance which drew the hearts of both hearers. He

went on without looking at Eleanor ; or without seeming to look that way.

"How can you what ?

"How can I have that ?"

"That helmet ? There is only one way."

"What is it, Mr. Rhys ?"

They were silent a minute, looking at each other, the man and the child ; the child with her eyes bent on his.

"Suppose somebody had taken your punishment for you ? borne the displeasure of God for your sins ?"

"Who would ?" said Julia. "Nobody would."

"One has."

"Who, Mr. Rhys ?"

"One that loved you, and that loved all of us, well enough to pay the price of saving us."

"What price did he pay ?"

"His own life. He gave it up cruelly—that ours might be redeemed."

"What for, Mr. Rhys ? what made him ?"

"Because he loved us. There was no other reason."

"Then people will be saved"—said Julia.

"Every one who will take the conditions. It depends upon that. There are conditions."

"What conditions, Mr. Rhys ?"

"Do you know who did this for you ?"

"No."

"It is the Lord himself—the Lord Jesus Christ—the Lord of glory. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross. So now he is exalted a Prince and a Saviour—able to save all who will accept his conditions."

"What are the conditions, Mr. Rhys ?"

"You must be his servant. And you must trust all your little heart and life to him."

"I must be his servant?" said Julia.

"Yes, heart and soul, to obey him. And you must trust him to forgive you and save you for his blood's sake."

Doubtless there had been something in the speaker himself that had held the child's attention so fast all this while. Her eyes had never wandered from his face; she had stood in docile wise looking at him and answering his questions and listening, won by the commentary she read in his face on what her friend was saying. A strange light kindled in it as he spoke; there were lines of affection and tenderness that came in the play of lips and eyes; and when he named his Master, there had shined in his face as it were the reflection of the glory he alluded to. Julia's eyes were not the only ones that had been held; though it was only Julia's tongue that said anything in reply. Standing now and looking still into the face she had been reading, her words were an unconscious rendering of what she found there.

"Mr. Rhys, I think he was very good."

The water filled those clear eyes at that, but he only returned the child's gaze and said nothing.

"I will take the conditions, Mr. Rhys," Julia went on.

"The Lord make it so!" he said gravely.

"But what is the helmet, Mr. Rhys?"

"When you have taken the conditions, little one, you will know." He rose up.

"Mr. Rhys," said Eleanor rising also, "I have listened to you, but I do not quite understand you."

"I recommend you to ask better teaching, Miss Powle."

"But I would like to know exactly what you mean, and what you meant, by that 'helmet' you speak of so often?"

He looked steadily now at the fair young face beside him, which told so plainly of the danger lately passed through. Eleanor could not return, though she suffered the examination. His answer was delayed while he made it.

"Do you ask from a sense of need?" he said.

Eleanor looked up then and answered, "Yes."

"To say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'—that is it," he said. "Then the head is covered—even from fear of evil."

It was impossible that Eleanor ever should forget the look that went with the words, and which had prevented her own gaze from seeking the ground again. The look of inward rejoicing and outward fearlessness; the fire and the softness that at once overspread his face. "He was looking at his Master then"—was the secret conclusion of Eleanor's mind. Even while she thought it, he had turned and was gone again with Julia. She stood still some minutes, weak as she was. She was not sure that she perfectly comprehended what that helmet might be, but of its reality there could be no questioning. She had seen its plumes wave over one brow!

"I know that my Redeemer liveth"—Eleanor sat down and mused over the words. She had heard them before; they were an expression of somebody's faith, she was not sure whose; but what faith was it? Faith that the Redeemer *lived*? Eleanor did not question that. She had repeated the Apostle's Creed many a time. Yet a vague feeling from the words she could not analyze—or arising perhaps from the look that had interpreted them—floated over her mind, disturbing it with an exceeding sense of want. She felt desolate and forlorn. What was to be done? Julia and Mr. Rhys were gone. The garden was empty. There was no more chance of counsel-taking to-night. Eleanor felt in no mood for gay gossip, and slowly mounted the stairs

to her own room, from whence she declined to come down again that night. She would like to find the settlement of this question, before she went back into the business of the world and was swallowed up by it, as she would soon be. Eleanor locked the door, and took up a Bible, and tried to find some good by reading in it. Her eyes and head were tired before her mind received any light. She was weak yet. She found the Bible very unsatisfactory ; and gave it up.

CHAPTER III.

"Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once;
And he that might the vantage best have took,
Found out the remedy."

"You can come down stairs to-night, Eleanor," said Mrs. Powle the next morning.

"I was down stairs last night—in the afternoon, I mean—mamma."

"Yes, but you did not stay. I want you in the drawing-room this evening. You can bear it now."

"I am in no hurry, mamma."

"Other people are, however. If you wear a white dress, do put a rose or some pink ribbands somewhere, to give yourself a little colour."

"Have you invited any one for this evening?"

"No, but people have promised themselves without being asked. Dr. Cairnes wants to see you; he said he would bring Mrs. Wycherly. Miss Broadus will be here of course; she declared she would; both of them. And Mr. Carlisle desired my permission to present himself."

"Mr. Rhys is coming," said Julia.

"I dare say. Mr. Powle wants him here all the time. It is a mercy the man has a little consideration—or some business to keep him at home—or he would be the sauce to every dish. As it is, he really is not obtrusive."

"Are all these people coming with the hope and intent of seeing me, mamma?"

"I can only guess at people's hopes, Eleanor. I am

guiltless of anything but confessing that you were to make your appearance."

"Mr. Rhys is not coming to see you," said Julia. "He wants to see the books—that is what he wants."

There was some promise for Eleanor in the company announced for the evening. If anybody could be useful to her in the matter of her late doubts and wishes, it ought to be Dr. Cairnes, the rector. He at least was the only one she knew whom she could talk to about them; the only friend. Mr. Rhys was a stranger and her brother's tutor; that was all; a chance of speaking to him again was possible, but not to be depended on. Dr. Cairnes was her pastor and old friend; it is true, she knew him best, out of the pulpit, as an antiquarian; then she had never tried him on religious questions. Nor he, she remembered; it was a doubtful hope altogether; nevertheless the evening offered what another evening might not in many a day. So Eleanor dressed, and with her slow languid step made her way down stairs to the scene of the social gayeties which had been so long interrupted for her.

Ivy Lodge was a respectable, comfortable, old house pretty by the combination of those advantages; and pleasant by the fact of making no pretensions beyond what it was worth. It was not disturbed by the rage after new fashions, nor the race after distant greatness. Quiet respectability was the characteristic of the family; Mrs. Powle alone being burdened with the consciousness of higher birth than belonged to the name of Powle generally. She fell into her husband's ways, however, outwardly, well enough; did not dislodge the old furniture, nor introduce new extravagances; and the Lodge was a pleasant place. "A most enjoyable house, my dear,"—as Miss Broadus expressed it. So the gentry of the neighbourhood found it universally.

The drawing-room was a pretty, spacious apartment;

light and bright ; opening upon the lawn directly without intervention of piazza or terrace. Windows, or rather glass doors, in deep recesses, stood open ; the company seemed to be half in and half out. Dr. Cairnes was there, talking with the squire. In another place Mrs. Powle was engaged with Mr. Carlisle. Further than those two groups, Eleanor's eye had no chance to go ; those who composed the latter greeted her instantly. Mrs. Powle's exclamation was of doubtful pleasure at Eleanor's appearance ; there was no question of her companion's gratification. He came forward to Eleanor, gave her his chair ; brought her a cup of tea, and then sat down to see her drink it ; with a manner which bespoke pleasure in every step of the proceedings. A manner which had rather the effect of a barrier to Eleanor's vision. It was gratifying certainly ; Eleanor felt it ; only she felt it a little too gratifying. Mr. Carlisle was getting on somewhat too fast for her. She drank her tea and kept very quiet ; while Mrs. Powle sat by and fanned herself, as contentedly as a mother duck swims that sees all her young ones taking to the water kindly.

Now and then Eleanor's eyes went out of the window. On the lawn at a little distance was a group of people, sitting close together and seeming very busy. They were Mr. Rhys, Miss Broadus, Alfred and Julia. Something interesting was going forward ; they were talking and listening, and looking at something they seemed to be turning over. Eleanor would have liked to join them ; but here was Mr. Carlisle ; and remembering the expression which had once crossed his face at the mention of Mr. Rhys's name, she would not draw attention to the group even by her eyes ; though they wandered that way stealthily whenever they could. What a good time those people were having there on the grass ; and she sitting fenced in by Mr. Carlisle.

Other members of the party who had not seen Eleanor, came up one after another to congratulate and welcome her; but Mr. Carlisle kept his place. Dr. Cairnes came, and Eleanor wanted a chance to talk to him. None was given her. Mr. Carlisle left his place for a moment to carry Eleanor's cup away, and Dr. Cairnes thoughtlessly took the vacated chair; but Mr. Carlisle stationed himself on the other side in the window; and she was as far from her opportunity as ever.

"Well my dear," said the doctor, "you have had a hard time, eh? We are glad to have you amongst us again."

"Hardly," put in Mrs. Powle. "She looks like a ghost."

"Rather a substantial kind of a ghost," said the doctor, pinching Eleanor's cheek; "*some* flesh and blood here yet—flesh at least;—and now the blood speaks for itself! That's right, my dear—you are better so."

Mr. Carlisle's smile said so too, as the doctor glanced at him. But the momentary colour faded again. Eleanor remembered how near she had come to being a ghost actually. Just then Mr. Carlisle's attention was forcibly claimed, and Mrs. Powle moved away. Eleanor seized her chance.

"Dr. Cairnes, I want your instruction in something."

"Well, my dear," said the doctor, lowering his tone in imitation of Eleanor's—"I shall be happy to be your instructor. I have been that, in some sort, ever since you were five years old—a little tot down in your mother's pew, sitting under my ministrations. What is it, Miss Eleanor?"

"I am afraid I did not receive much in those days, sir."

"Probably not. Hardly to be expected. I have no doubt you received as much as a child could, from the

mysteries which were above its comprehension. What is it now, Miss Eleanor?

"Something in your line, sir. Dr. Cairnes, you remember the helmet spoken of in the Bible?"

"Helmet?" said the doctor. "Goliath's? He had a helmet of brass upon his head. Must have been heavy, but I suppose he could carry it. The same thing essentially as those worn by our ancestors—a little variation in form. What about it, my dear? I am glad to see you smiling again."

"Nothing about that. I am speaking of another sort of helmet—do you not remember?—it is called somewhere the helmet of salvation."

"*That?* O!—um! *That* helmet! Yes—it is in, let me see—it is in the description of Christian armour, in a fine passage in Ephesians, I think. What about that, Miss Eleanor?"

"I want to know, sir, what shape that helmet takes."

It was odd, with what difficulty Eleanor brought out her questions. It was touching, the concealed earnestness which lingered behind her glance and smile.

"Shape?" said the doctor, descending into his cravat;—"um! a fair question; easier asked than answered. Why my dear, you should read a commentary."

"I like living commentaries, Dr. Cairnes."

"Do you? Ha, ha!—well. Living commentaries, eh? and shapes of helmets. Well. What shape does it take? Why, my dear, you know of course that those expressions are figurative. I think it takes the shape of a certain composure and peace of mind which the Christian soul feels, and justly feels, in regarding the provision made for its welfare in the gospel. It is spoken of as the helmet of salvation; and there is the shield of faith; and so forth."

Eleanor felt utterly worried, and did not in the least know how to frame her next question.

"What has put you upon thinking of helmets, Miss Eleanor?"

"I was curious—" said Eleanor.

"You had some serious thoughts in your illness?" said the doctor. "Well, my dear—I am glad of it. Serious thoughts do not in the least interfere with all proper present enjoyments; and with improper ones you would not wish to have anything to do."

"May we not say that serious thoughts are the *foundation* of all true present enjoyment?" said another voice. It was Mr. Rhys who spoke. Eleanor started to hear him, and to see him suddenly in the place where Mr. Carlisle had been, standing in the window.

"Eh? Well—no,—not just that," said Dr. Cairnes coolly. "I have a good deal of enjoyment in various things—this fair day and this fair company, for example, and Mrs. Powle's excellent cup of tea—with which I apprehend serious thoughts have nothing to do."

"But we are commanded to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus."

"Well—um! That is to be taken of course in its rational significance. A cup of tea is a cup of tea—and nothing more. There is nothing at the bottom of it—ha, ha!—but a little sugar. Nothing more serious."

Mr. Rhys's figure standing in the window certainly hindered a part of the light. To judge by the doctor's face, he was keeping out the whole.

"What do you suppose the apostle means, sir; when he says, 'Henceforward know I no man after the flesh?'"

"Hum!—Ah,—well, he was an apostle. I am not. Perhaps you are?"

There was a degree of covert disdain in this speech, which Eleanor wondered at in so well-bred a man as Dr.

Cairnes. Mr. Rhys answered with perfect steadiness, with no change of tone or manner.

"Without being inspired—I think, in the sense of *messenger*, every minister of Christ is his apostle."

"Ah! Well!—I am not even apostolic," said the doctor, with one or two contented and discontented grunts. Eleanor understood them; the content was his own, the discontent referred to the speaker whose words were so inopportune. The doctor rose and left the ground. Mr. Rhys had gone even before him; and Eleanor wondered anew whether this man were indeed shy or not. He was so little seen and heard; yet spoke, when he spoke, with such clearness and self-possession. He was gone now, and Mr. Carlisle was still busy. Up came Miss Broadus and took the vacant seat.

It is impossible to describe Miss Broadus's face. It was in a certain sense fair, and fat, and fresh-coloured; but the "windows of her soul" shewed very little light from within; they let out nothing but a little gleam now and then. However, her tongue was fluent, and matter for speech never wanting. She was kindly too, in manner at least; and extremely sociable with all her neighbours, low as well as high; none of whose affairs wanted interest for her. It was in fact owing to Miss Broadus's good offices with Mrs. Powle, that Mr. Rhys had been invited to join the pleasure party with which the adventures of this book begin. The good lady was as neat as a pink in her dress; and very fond of being as showy, in a modest way.

"Among us again, Eleanor?" she said. "We are glad to see you. So is Mr. Carlisle, I should judge. We have missed you badly. You have been terribly ill, haven't you? Yes, you shew it. But *that* will soon pass away, my dear. I longed to get in to do something for you—but Mrs. Powle would not let me; and I knew you had the best of everything all the while.

Only I thought I would bring you a pot of my grape jelly; for Mrs. Powle don't make it; and it is so refreshing."

"It was very nice, thank you."

"O it was nothing, my dear; only we wanted to do something. I have been having such an interesting time out there; didn't you see us sitting on the grass? Mr. Rhys is quite a botanist—or a naturalist—or something; and he was quite the centre of our entertainment. He was shewing us ferns—fern leaves, my dear; and talking about them. Do you know, as I told him, I never looked at a fern leaf before; but now really it's quite curious; and he has almost made me believe I could see a certain kind of beauty in them. You know there is a *sort* of beauty which some people think they find in a great many things; and when they are enthusiastic, they almost make you think as they do. I think there is great power in enthusiasm."

"Is Mr. Rhys enthusiastic?"

"O I don't know, my dear,—I don't know what you would call it; I am not a philosopher; but he is very fond of ferns himself. He is a very fine man. He is a great deal too good to go and throw himself away."

"Is that what he is going to do?"

"Why yes, my dear; that is what I should call it. It is a great deal more than that. I never can remember the place; but it is the most dreadful place, I do suppose, that ever was heard of. I never heard of such a place. They do every horrible thing there—my dear, the accounts make your blood creep. I think Mr. Rhys is a great deal too valuable a man to be lost there, among such a set of creatures—they are more like devils than men. And Eleanor," said Miss Broadus looking round to see that nobody was within hearing of her communication,—“you have no idea what a pleasant man he is. I asked him to tea with Juliana and me—you know one

must be kind and neighbourly at any rate—and he has no friends here ; I sometimes wonder if he has any anywhere ; but he came to tea, and he was as agreeable as possible. He was really excellent company, and very well behaved. I think Juliana quite fell in love with him ; but I tell her it's no use ; she never would go off to that dreadful place with him."

And Miss Broadus laughed a laugh of simple amusement ; Miss Juliana being, though younger than herself, still very near the age of an old lady. They kept the light-hearted simplicity of young years, however, in a remarkable degree ; and so had contrived to dispense with wrinkles on their fresh old faces.

"Where is that place, Miss Broadus ?"

"My dear, I never can remember the name of it. They do say the country is beautiful, and the fruit, and all that ; it is described to be a beautiful place, where, as Heber's hymn says, "only man is vile." But he is as vile as he can be, there. And I am sure Mr. Rhys would be a great loss at Wiglands. My dear, how pleasant it would be, I said to Juliana this morning, how pleasant it would be, if Mr. Rhys were only in the Church, and could help good Dr. Cairnes. Tisn't likely they will let him live long out there, if he goes."

"When is he going ?"

"O I don't know when, my dear ; he is waiting for something. And I never can remember the name of the place ; if a word has many syllables I cannot keep them together in my memory ; only I know the vegetables there grow to an enormous size, and as if that wasn't enough, men devour each other. It seems like an abusing the gifts of providence, don't it ? But there is nothing they do not abuse. I am afraid they will abuse poor Mr. Rhys. And his boys would miss him very much, and I am sure we all should. I have got quite acquainted with him, seeing him here ; and now

Juliana has taken a fancy to ask him to our cottage—and I have come to quite like him. What a different looking man he is from Mr. Carlisle—now look at them talking together!—”

“Where did you learn all this, Miss Broadus? did Mr. Rhys tell you?”

“No, my dear; he never will talk about it or about himself. He lent me a pamphlet or something.—Mr. Rhys is the tallest—but Mr. Carlisle is a splendid looking man,—don’t you think so Eleanor?”

Miss Broadus’s energetic whisper Eleanor thought fit to ignore, though she did not fail to note the contrast which a moment’s colloquy between the two men presented. There was little in common between them; between the marked features and grave keen expression of the one face, and the cool, bright, somewhat supercilious eye and smile of the other. There was power in both faces, Eleanor thought, of different kinds; and power is attractive. Her eye was held till they parted from each other. Two very different walks in life claimed the two men; so much Eleanor could see. For some time after she was obliged to attend exclusively to that walk of life which Mr. Carlisle represented, and to look at the views he brought forward for her notice.

They were not so engrossing, however, that Eleanor entirely forgot the earlier conversation of the afternoon or the question which had troubled her. The evening had been baffling. She had not had a word with Mr. Rhys, and he had disappeared long since from the party. So had Dr. Cairnes. There was no more chance of talk upon that subject to-night; and Eleanor feeling very feeble still, thought best to cut short Mr. Carlisle’s enjoyment of other subjects for the evening. She left the company, and slowly passed through the house, from room to room, to get to her own. In the course of this progress she came to the library. There,

seated at one of the tables and bending over a volume, was Mr. Rhys. He jumped up as she passed through, and came forward with extended hand and a word of kindly inquiry. His "good night" was so genial, his clasp of her hand so frank and friendly, that instead of going on, Eleanor stood still.

"Are you studying?"

"Your father has kindly given me liberty to avail myself of his treasures here. My time is very scanty—I was tempted to seize the moment that offered itself. It is a very precious privilege to me, and one which I shall not abuse."

"Pray do not speak of abusing," said Eleanor; "nobody minds the books here; I am glad they are good to anybody else.—I am interrupting you."

"Not at all!" said he bringing up a great chair for her,—“or only agreeably. Pray sit down—you are not fit to stand."

Eleanor however remained standing, and hesitating, for a moment.

"I wish you would tell me a little more about what we were talking of," she said with some effort.

"Do you feel your want of the helmet?" he said gravely.

"I feel that I haven't it," said Eleanor.

"What is it that you are conscious of wanting?"

She hesitated; it was a home question; and very unaccustomed to speak of her secret thoughts and feelings to any one, especially on religious subjects, which however had never occupied her before, Eleanor was hardly ready to answer. Yet in the tones of the question there was a certain quiet assurance and simplicity before which she yielded.

"I felt—a little while ago—when I was sick—that I was not exactly safe."

Eleanor spoke, hesitating between every few words,

looking down, and falling her voice at the end. So she did not see the keen intentness of the look that was fixed upon her.

"You felt that there was something wanting between you and God?"

"I believe so."

His accent was as deliberately clear as her's was hesitating. Every word went into Eleanor's soul.

"Then you can understand now, that when one can say, joyfully, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth';—when he is no vague abstraction, but felt to be a *Redeemer*;—when one can say assuredly, he is *my Redeemer*; I know he has bought back my soul from sin and from the punishment of sin, which is death; I feel I am forgiven; and I know he liveth—my Redeemer—and according to his promise lives to deliver me from every evil and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom;—do you see, now, that one who can say this has on his head the covering of an infinite protection—an infinite shelter from both danger and fear?—a helmet, placed on his head by his Lord's own hand, and of such heavenly temper that no blows can break through it."

Eleanor was a little time silent, with downcast eyes.

"You do not mean to say, that this protection is against *all* evil; do you? sickness and pain are evils, are they not?"

"Not to him."

"Not to him?"

"No. The evil of them is gone. They can do him no harm; if they come, they will do good. He that wears this helmet has absolutely no evil to fear. All things shall work good to him. There shall no evil happen to the just. Blessed be the Lord, who only doeth wondrous things!"

Eleanor stood silenced, humbled, convinced; till she recollected she must not stand there so, and she

lifted her eyes to bid good-night. Then the face she met gave a new turn to her thoughts. It was a changed face; such a light of pure joy and deep triumph shone over it, not hiding nor hindering the loving care with which those penetrating eyes were reading herself. It gave Eleanor a strange compression of heart; it told her more than his words had done; it shewed her the very reality of which he spoke. Eleanor went away overwhelmed.

“Mr. Rhys is a happy man!” she said to herself;—happy, happy! I wish,—I wish, I were as happy as he!”

CHAPTER IV.

"She has two eyes, so soft and brown,
Take care!
She gives a side-glance and looks down,
Beware! beware!"

A FEW days more saw Eleanor restored to all the strength and beauty of health which she had been accustomed to consider her natural possession. And then—it is likely to be so—she was so happy in what mind and body had, that she forgot her wish for what the spirit had not. Or almost forgot it. Eleanor lived a very full life. It was no dull languid existence that she dragged on from day to day; time counted out none but golden pennies into her hand. Every minute was filled with business or play, both heartily entered into, and pursued with all the energy of a very energetic nature. Study, when she touched it, was sweet to her; but Eleanor did not study much. Nature was an enchanted palace of light and perfume. Bodily exertion, riding and walking, was as pleasant to her as it is to a bird to use its wings. Family intercourse, and neighbourly society, were nothing but pleasure. Benevolent kindness, if it came in her way, was a labour of love; and a hundred home occupations were greatly delighted in. They were not generally of an exalted character; Eleanor's training and associations had not led her into any very dignified path of human action; she had led only a butterfly's life of content and pleasure, and her character was not at all matured; but the capabilities were there; and the energy and will that

might have done greater things, wrought beautiful embroidery, made endless fancy work, ordered well such part of the household economy as was committed to her, carried her bright smile into every circle, and made Eleanor's foot familiar with all the country where she could go alone, and her pony's trot well known in every lane and roadway where she could go with his company.

All these enjoyments of her life were taken with new relish and zeal after her weeks of illness had laid her aside from them. Eleanor's world was brighter than ever. And round about all of these various enjoyments now, circling them with a kind of halo of expectancy or possibility, was the consciousness of a prospect that Eleanor knew was opening before her—a brilliant life-possession that she saw Fortune offering to her with a gracious hand. Would Eleanor take it? That Eleanor did not quite know. Meanwhile her eyes could not help looking that way; and her feet, consciously or unconsciously, now and then made a step towards it.

She and her mother were sitting at work one morning—that is to say, Eleanor was drawing and Mrs. Powle cutting tissue paper in some very elaborate way, for some unknown use or purpose; when Julia dashed in. She threw a bunch of bright blue flowers on the table before her sister.

"There," she said—"do you know what that is?"

"Why certainly," said Eleanor. "It is borage."

"Well, do you know what it means?"

"What it *means*? No. What does any flower mean?"

"I'll tell you what *this* means"—said Julia.

"I, borage
Bring courage."

"That is what people used to think it meant."

"How do you know that."

"Mr. Rhys says so. This borage grew in Mrs. Williams's garden ; and I dare say she believes it."

"Who is Mrs. Williams?"

"Why!—she's the old woman where Mr. Rhys lives; he lives in her cottage; that's where he has his school. He has a nice little room in her cottage, and there's nobody else in the cottage but Mrs. Williams."

"Do, Julia, carry your flowers off, and do not be so hoydenish," said Mrs. Powle.

"We have not seen Mr. Rhys here in a great while mamma," said Eleanor. "I wonder what has become of him."

"I'll tell you," said Julia—"he has become not well. I know Mr. Rhys is sick, because he is so pale and weak. And I know he is weak, because he cannot walk as he used to do. We used to walk all over the hills; and he says he can't go now."

"Mamma, it would be right to send down and see what is the matter with him. There must be something. It is a long time—mamma, I think it is weeks—since he was at the Lodge."

"Your father will send, I dare say," said Mrs. Powle, cutting her tissue paper.

"Mamma, did you hear," said Eleanor as Julia ran off, "that Mr. Rhys was going to leave Wiglands and bury himself in some dreadful place, somewhere?"

"I heard so."

"What place is it?"

"I can't tell, I am sure. It is somewhere in the South Seas, I believe—that region of horrors."

"Is it true he is going there, mamma?"

"I am sure I can't tell. Miss Broadus says so; and she says, I believe, he told her so himself. If he did, I suppose it is true."

"Mamma, I think Mr. Rhys is a great deal too fine a

man, to go and lose his life in such a place. Miss Broadus says it is horrible. Do you know anything about it?"

"I have no taste for horrors," said Mrs. Powle.

"I think it is a great pity," Eleanor repeated. "I am sorry. There is enough in England for such a man to do, without going to the South Seas. I wonder how anybody *can* leave England!"

Mrs. Powle looked up at her daughter and laughed. Eleanor had suspended her drawing and was sending a loving gaze out of the open window, where nature and summer were revelling in their conjoined riches. Art shewed her hand too, stealthily, having drawn out of the way of the others whatever might encumber the revel. Across a wide stretch of wooded and cultivated country, the eye caught the umbrageous heights on the further side of the valley of the Ryth. Eleanor's gaze was fixed. Mrs. Powle's glance was sly.

"I should like to ask your opinion of another place," she said,—“which, being in England, is not horrible. You see that bit of brown mason-work, high away there, peeping out above the trees in the distance?—You know what house that is?"

"Certainly."

"What is it?"

"It is the Priory. The new Priory, it ought to be called; I am sure the old one is down there in the valley yet—beneath it." But Eleanor's colour rose.

"What do you think of that place?"

"Considering that the old priory and its grounds belong to it, I think it must be one of the loveliest places in England."

"I should like to see it in your possession—" Mrs. Powle remarked, going on with her tissue paper.

Eleanor also went on assiduously with her drawing,

and her colour remained a rich tint. But she went on frankly with her words too.

"I am not sure, mamma, that I like the owner of it well enough to receive such a valuable gift from him."

"He likes you, quite well enough to bestow it on you, without asking any questions," said Mrs. Powle. "He hardly thinks it is worth having, unless you have it too."

"That is inconvenient," said Eleanor.

"It strikes me the other way," said her mother.

"How do you know this, which you affirm so securely, mamma?"

"How should I know it? The person in question told me himself."

"Told you in so many words?"

"No, in a great many more," said Mrs. Powle laughing. "I have merely presented a statement. He had a great deal more to do than that."

The tissue paper rustled quietly for some time after this, and Eleanor's pencil could be heard making quick marks. Neither lady interrupted the other.

"Well, Eleanor,—how does it seem to you?" began the elder lady, in a tone of quiet satisfaction.

"Inconvenient, mamma,—as I said."

"How?"

But Eleanor did not say how.

"Mr. Carlisle will be here for his answer this evening."

"I like him very well, mamma," said Eleanor after another pause,—“but I do not like him enough.”

"Nonsense! You would like to be Lady Rythdale, wouldn't you?"

The silence which followed this was longer than that which had been before. Knife and pencil pursued their work, but Mrs. Powle glancing up furtively from her tissue paper saw that Eleanor's brow was knitted

and that her pencil was moving under the influence of something besides Art. So she let her alone for a long time. And Eleanor's fancy saw a vision of fairy beauty and baronial dignity before her. They lay in the wide domains and stately appendages of Rythdale Priory. How could she help seeing it? The vision floated before her with point after point of entrancing loveliness, old history, present luxury, hereditary rank and splendour, and modern power. It was like nothing in Eleanor's own home. Her father, though a comfortable country gentleman, boasted nothing and had nothing to boast in the way of ancestry, beyond a respectable descent of several generations. His means, though ample enough for comfort and reasonable indulgence, could make no pretensions to more. And Ivy Lodge was indeed a pleasant home, and every field and hedge-row belonging to it was lovely to Eleanor; but the broad manors of Rythdale Priory for extent would swallow up many such, and for beauty and dignity were as a damask rose to a bit of eglantine. Would Eleanor be Lady Rythdale?"

"He will be here this evening for his answer, Eleanor—" Mrs. Powle remarked in a quiet voice the second time.

"Then you must give it to him, mamma."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. You must see him yourself. I will have no such shifting of your work upon my shoulders."

"I do not wish to see him to-night, mamma."

"I choose that you should. Don't talk any nonsense to me, Eleanor."

"But mamma, if I am to give the answer, I am not ready with any answer to give."

"Tell Mr. Carlisle so; and he will draw his own conclusions, and make you sign them."

"I do not want to be made to sign anything."

"Do it of free-will then," said Mrs. Powle laughing. "It is coming Eleanor—one way or the other. If I were you, I would do it gracefully. Is it a hard thing to be Lady Rythdale?"

Eleanor did not say, and nothing further passed on the subject; till as both parties were leaving the room together, Mrs. Powle said significantly,

"You must give your own answer, Eleanor, and to-night. I will have no skulking."

It was beyond Mrs. Powle's power, however, to prevent skulking of a certain sort. Eleanor did not hide herself in her room, but she left it late in the afternoon, when she knew the company consisted of more than one, and entered a tolerably well filled drawing-room. Mrs. Powle had not wished to have it so, but these things do not arrange themselves for our wishes. Miss Broadus was there, and Dr. Cairnes, and friends who had come to make him and his sister a visit; and one or two other neighbours. Eleanor came in without making much use of her eyes, and sheltered herself immediately under the wing of Miss Broadus, who was the first person she fell in with. Two pairs of eyes saw her entrance; with oddly enough the same thought and comment. "She will make a lovely Lady Rythdale." All the baronesses of that house had been famous for their beauty, and the heir of the house remarked to himself that *this* would prove not the least lovely of the race. However, Eleanor did not even feel sure that he was there, he kept at such a distance; and she engaged Miss Broadus in a conversation that seemed of interminable resources. The sole thing that Eleanor was conscious of concerning it, was its lasting quality; and to maintain that was her only care.

Would Eleanor be Lady Rythdale? she had made up her mind to nothing, except, that it would be very difficult for her to say either yes or no. Naturally enough,

she dreaded the being obliged to say anything ; and was ready to seize every expedient to stave off the moment of emergency. As long as she was talking to Miss Broadus, she was safe ; but conversations cannot last always, even when they flow in a stream so full and copious as that in which the words always poured from that lady's lips. Eleanor saw signs at last that the fountain was getting exhausted ; and as the next resort proposed a game of chess. Now a game of chess was the special delight of Miss Broadus ; and as it was the detestation of her sister Miss Juliana, the delight was seldom realized. The two sisters were harmonious in everything except a few tastes, and perhaps their want of harmony in those points gave their life the variety it needed. At any rate, such an offer as Eleanor's was rarely refused by the elder sister ; and the two ladies were soon deep in their business. One really, the other seemingly. Though indeed it is true that Eleanor was heartily engaged to prevent the game coming to a termination, and therefore played in good earnest, not for conquest but for time. This had gone on a good while, before she was aware that a footstep was drawing near the chess table, and then that Mr. Carlisle stood beside her chair.

"Now don't *you* come to help !" said Miss Broadus, with a thoughtful face and a piece between her finger and thumb.

"Why not ?"

"I know !" said Miss Broadus, never taking her eyes from the board which held them as by a charm,—*"I can play a sort of a game ; but if you take part against me, I shall be vanquished directly."*

"Why should I take part against you ?"

Miss Broadus at that laughed a good-humoured little simple laugh. "Well"—she said, "it's the course of events, I suppose. I never find anybody taking my part

now-a-days. There! I am afraid you have made me place that piece wrong, Mr. Carlisle. I wish you would be still. I cannot fight against two such clever people."

"Do you find Miss Powle clever?"

"I didn't know she was, so much, before," said Miss Broadus, "but she has been playing like a witch this evening. There Eleanor—you are in check."

Eleanor was equal to that emergency, and relieved her king from danger with a very skilful move. She could keep her wits, though her cheek was high-coloured and her hand had a secret desire to be nervous. Eleanor would not let it; and Mr. Carlisle admired the very pretty fingers which paused quietly upon the chess-men.

"Do not forget a proper regard for the interests of the church, Miss Broadus," he remarked.

"Why I never do!" said Miss Broadus. "What do you mean? Oh my bishop!—Thank you, Mr. Carlisle."

Eleanor did not thank him, for the bishop's move shut up her play in a corner. She did her best, but her king's resources were cut off; and after a little shuffling she was obliged to surrender at discretion. Miss Broadus arose, pleased, and reiterating her thanks to Mr. Carlisle, and walked away; as conscious that her presence was no more needed in that quarter.

"Will you play with me?" said Mr. Carlisle, taking the chair Miss Broadus had quitted.

"Yes," said Eleanor, glad of anything to stave off what she dreaded; "but I am not—"

"I am no match for you," she was going to say. She stopped suddenly and coloured more deeply.

"What are you not?" asked the gentleman, slowly setting his pawns.

"I am not a very good player. I shall hardly give you amusement."

"I am not sorry for that—supposing it true. I do not like to see women good chess-players."

"Pray why do you not like it?"

"Chess is a game of planning—scheming—contriving—calculating. Women ought not to be adepts in those arts. I hate women that are."

He glanced up as he spoke, at the fair, frank lines of the face opposite him. No art to scheme was shewn in them; there might be resolution; he liked that. He liked it too that the fringe of the eyes drooped over them, and that the tint of the cheek was so very rich.

"But they say, no one can equal a woman in scheming and planning, if she takes to it," said Eleanor.

"Try your skill," said he. "It is your move."

The game began, and Eleanor tried to make good play; but she could not bring to it the same coolness or the same acumen that had fought with Miss Broadus. The well-formed, well-knit hand with the coat sleeve belonging to it, which was all of her adversary that came under her observation, distracted Eleanor's thoughts; she could not forget whose it was. Very different from the weak flexile fingers of Miss Broadus, with their hesitating movement and doubtful pauses, these did their work and disappeared; with no doubt or hesitancy of action, and with agile firmness in every line of muscle and play. Eleanor shewed very poor skill for her part, at planning and contriving on this occasion; and she had a feeling that her opponent might have ended the game many a time if he had chosen it. Still the game did not end. It was a very silent one.

"You are playing with me, Mr. Carlisle," she said at length.

"What are you doing with me?"

"Making no fight at all; but that is because I cannot. Why don't you conquer me and end the game?"

"How can I?"

"I am sure I don't know; but I believe you do. It

is all a muddle to me ; and not a very interesting piece of confusion to you, I should think."

He did not answer that, but moved a piece ; Eleanor made the answering move ; and the next step created a lock. The game could go no further. Eleanor began to put up the pieces, feeling worsted in more ways than one. She had not dared to raise her eyes higher than that coat-sleeve ; and she knew at the same time that she herself had been thoroughly overlooked. Those same fingers came now helping her to lay the chessmen in the box, ordering them better than she did.

"I want to shew you some cottages I have been building beyond Rythdale tower," said the owner of the fingers. "Will you ride with me to-morrow to look at them ?"

He waited for her answer, which Eleanor hesitated to give. But she could not say no, and finally she gave a low yes. Her yes was so low, it was significant ; Eleanor knew it ; but Mr. Carlisle went on in the same tone.

"At what hour ? At eleven ?"

"That will do," said Eleanor, after hesitating again.

"Thank you."

He went on, taking the chessmen from her fingers as fast as she gathered them up, and bestowing them in the box after a leisurely manner ; then rose and bowed and took his departure. Eleanor saw that he did not hold any communication with her mother on his way out ; and in dread of Mrs. Powle's visitation of curiosity upon herself, she too made as quick and as quiet an escape as possible to her own room. There locked the door and walked the floor to think.

In effect she had given her answer, by agreeing to ride ; she knew it. She knew that Mr. Carlisle had taken it so, even by the slight freedom with which his fingers touched hers in taking the chessmen from them.

It was a very little thing; and yet Eleanor could never recall the willing contact of those fingers, repeated and repeated, without a thrill of feeling that she had committed herself; that she had given the end of the clue into Mr. Carlisle's hand, which duly wound up would land her safe enough, mistress of Rythdale Priory. And was she unwilling to be that? No—not exactly. And did she dislike Rythdale Priory's master, or future master? No, not at all; nevertheless, Eleanor did not feel quite willing to have him hers just yet; she was not ready for that; and she chafed at feeling that the end of that clue was in the hand of her chess-playing antagonist, and alternatives pretty well out of her power. An alternative Eleanor would have liked. She would have liked the play to have gone on for some time longer, leaving her her liberty in all kinds; liberty to make up her mind at leisure, among other things. She was not just now eager to be mistress of anything but herself.

Eleanor watched for her mother's coming, but Mrs. Powle was wiser. She had marked the air of both parties on quitting the drawing-room; and though doubtless she would have liked a little word revelation of what she desired to know, she was content to leave things in train. She judged that Mr. Carlisle could manage his own affairs, and went to bed well satisfied; while Eleanor, finding that her mother was not coming, at last laid herself also down to rest, with a mixed feeling of pleasure and pain in her heart, but vexation towering above all. It would have been vexation still better grown, if she had known the hint her mother had given Mr. Carlisle, when that evening he had applied to her for what news she had for him? Mrs. Powle referred him very smilingly to Eleanor to learn it; at the same time telling him that Eleanor had been allowed to run wild—like her sister Julia—till now she was a little wilful and needed taming.

She looked the character sufficiently well when she came down the next morning. The colour on her cheek was raised yet, and rich; and Eleanor's beautiful lips did not unbend to their brilliant mischievous smile. She was somewhat quick and nervous too about her household arrangements and orders, which yet Eleanor did not neglect. It was time then to dress for her ride; and Eleanor dressed, not hurriedly but carefully, between pleasure and irritation. By what impulse she could not have told, she pulled the feather from her riding cap. It was a long, jaunty black feather, that somewhat shaded and softened her face in riding with its floating play. Her cap now, and her whole dress, was simplicity itself; but if Eleanor had meant to cheat Mr. Carlisle of some pleasure, she had misjudged and lost her aim; the close little unadorned cap but shewed the better her beautiful hair and a face and features which nobody that loved them could wish even shaded from view.

Mrs. Powle had maintained a discreet silence all the morning; nevertheless Eleanor was still afraid that she might come to ask questions, and not enduring to answer them, as soon as her toilet was finished she fled from her room into the garden. This garden, into which the old schoolroom opened, was Eleanor's particular property. No other of the family were ever to be found in it. She had arranged its gay curves and angles, and worked in it and kept it in great part herself. The dew still hung on the leaves; the air of a glorious summer morning was sweet with the varied fragrance of the flowers. Eleanor's heart sprung for the dear old liberty she and the garden had had together; she went lingeringly and thoughtfully among her petunias and carnations, remembering how joyous that liberty had been; and yet—she was not willing to say the word that would secure it to her. She roved about among the walks,

NOTE TO THE READER

The incidents and testimonies given in this book of fact, are not drawn from imagination, but are from excellent authority—though I have used my own words in the case of reported words of third parties, and have unchanged, without any meddling.



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picking carnations in one hand and gathering up her habit with the other. So her little sister found her.

"Why Eleanor!—are you going to ride with Mr. Carlisle?"

"Yes."

"Well he has come—he is waiting for you. He has brought the most *splendid* black horse for you that you ever saw; papa says she is magnificent."

"I ordered my pony"—said Eleanor.

"Well the pony is there, and so is the black horse. O such a beauty, Eleanor! Come."

Eleanor would not go through the house, to see her mother and father by the way. Instinctively she sheered off by the shrubbery paths, which turning and winding at last brought her out upon the front lawn. On the whole a more marked entrance upon the scene the young lady could not have contrived. From the green setting of the shrubbery her excellent figure came out to view, in its dark riding drapery; and carnations in one hand, her habit in the other, she was a pleasant object to several pairs of eyes that were watching her; Julia having done them the kind office to say which way she was coming.

Of them all, however, Eleanor only saw Mr. Carlisle, who was on the ground to meet her. Perhaps he had as great an objection to eyes as she had; for his removal of his cap in greeting was as cool as if she had been a stranger; and so were his words.

"I have brought Black Maggie for you—will you do me the honour to try her?"

Eleanor did not say she would not, and did not say anything. Hesitation and embarrassment were the two pleasant feelings which possessed her and forbade her to speak. She stood before the superb animal, which showed blood in every line of its head and beautiful frame; and looked at it, and looked at the ground. Mr.

Carlisle gently removed the carnations from her hand, taking them into his own, then gave her the reins of Black Maggie and put her into the saddle. In another minute they were off, and out of the reach of observation. But Eleanor had felt again, even in that instant or giving into her fingers the reins which he had taken from the groom, the same thing that she had felt last night—the expression of something new between them. She was in a very divided state of mind. She had not told him he might take that tone with her.

“There are two ways to the head of the valley,” said the subject of her thoughts. “Shall we take the circuit by the old priory, or go by the moor?”

“By the moor,” said Eleanor.

There, for miles, was a level plain road; they could ride any pace, and she could stave off talking. Accordingly, as soon as they got quit of human habitations, Eleanor gave Black Maggie secretly to understand that she might go as fast as she liked. Black Maggie apparently relished the intimation, for she sprang forward at a rate Eleanor by experience knew nothing of. She had never been quite so well mounted before. As swiftly and as easily as if Black Maggie’s feet had been wings, they flew over the common. The air was fresh, the motion was quite sufficient to make it breezy; Eleanor felt exhilarated. All the more because she felt rebellious, and the stopping Mr. Carlisle’s mouth was at least a gratification, though she could not leave him behind. He had not mounted her better than himself. Fly as Black Maggie would, her brown companion was precisely at her side. Eleanor had a constant sense of that; but however, the ride was so capital, the moor so wild, the summer air so delicious, that by degrees she began to grow soothed and come down from rebellion to good humour. By and by, Black Maggie got excited. It was with nothing but her own spirits and motion; quite

enough though to make hoofs still more emulous of wings. Now she flew indeed. Eleanor's bridle rein was not sufficient to hold her in, or make any impression. She could hardly see how they went.

"Is not this too much for you?" the voice of Mr. Carlisle said quietly.

"Rather—but I can't check her," said Eleanor; vexed to make the admission, and vexed again when a word or two from the rider at her side, who at the same moment leaned forward and touched Maggie's bridle, brought the wild creature instantly not only from her mad gallop but back to a very demure and easy trot. So demure, that there was no longer any bar to conversation; but then Eleanor reflected she could not gallop always, and they were almost off the plain road of the moor. How beautiful the moor had been to her that morning! Now Eleanor looked at Black Maggie's ears.

"How do you like her?" said Mr. Carlisle.

"Charming! She is perfection. She is delightful."

"She must learn to know her mistress," he rejoined, leaning forward again and drawing Maggie's reins through his fingers. "Take her up a little shorter—and speak to her the next time she does not obey you."

The flush rose to Eleanor's cheeks, and over her brow, and reddened her very temples. She made no sort of answer, yet she knew silence was answer, and that her blood was speaking for her. It was pretty speaking, but extremely inconvenient. And what business had Mr. Carlisle to take things for granted in that way? Eleanor began to feel rebellious again.

"Do you always ride with so loose a rein?" began Mr. Carlisle again.

"I don't know—I never think about it. My pony is perfectly safe."

"So is Maggie—as to her feet; but in general, it is well to let everything under you feel your hand."

"That is what you do, I have no doubt," thought Eleanor, and bit her lip. She would have started into another gallop; but they were entering upon a narrow and rough way where galloping was inadmissible. It descended gradually and winding among rocks and broken ground, to a lower level, the upper part of the valley of the Ryth; a beautiful clear little stream flowing brightly in a rich meadow ground, with gently shelving, softly broken sides; the initiation of the wilder scenery further down the valley. Here were the cottages Mr. Carlisle had spoken of. They looked very picturesque and very inviting too; standing on either side the stream, across which a rude rustic bridge was thrown. Each cottage had its paling enclosure, and built of grey rough stone, with deep sloping roofs and bright little casements, they looked the very ideal of humble homes. No smoke rose from the chimneys, and nobody was visible without or within.

"I want some help of you here," said Mr. Carlisle. "Do you like the situation?"

"Most beautiful!" said Eleanor heartily. "And the houses are just the thing."

"Will you dismount and look a little closer? We will cross the bridge first."

They drew bridle before one of the cottages. Eleanor had all the mind in the world to have thrown herself from Black Maggie's back, as she was accustomed to do from her own pony; but she did not dare. Yesterday she would have dared; to-day there was a slight indefinable change in the manner of Mr. Carlisle towards herself, which cast a spell over her. He stood beside Black Maggie, the carnations making a rosy spot in the buttonhole of his white jacket, while he gave some order to the groom—Eleanor did not hear what, for her mind was on something else; then turned to her and took her down, that same indescribable quality of manner and

handling saying to all her senses that he regarded the horse and the lady with the same ownership. Eleanor felt proud, and vexed, and ashamed, and pleased; her mind divided between different feelings; but Mr. Carlisle directed her attention now to the cottages.

It was impossible not to admire and be pleased with them. The exterior was exceedingly homelike and pretty; within, there was yet more to excite admiration. Nicely arranged, neatly and thoroughly furnished, even to little details, they looked most desirable homes for any persons of humble means, even though the tastes had not been equally humble. From one to another Mr. Carlisle took Eleanor; displaying his arrangements to a very silent observer; for though she thought all this admiration, she hardly said anything. Between irritation, and pleasure, and a pretty well-grown shyness, she felt very tongue-tied. At last, after shewing her the view from the lattice of a nice little cottage kitchen, Mr. Carlisle asked for her judgment upon what had been done.

"It is thoroughly excellent," said Eleanor. "They leave nothing to wish. I have never seen such nice cottages. There is nobody in them yet?"

"Is there any improvement to be made?"

"None to be desired, I think," said Eleanor. "They are just perfect little homes. They only want the people now."

"And that is where I want your help. Do you think of any good families, or poor people you approve of, that you would like to put in some of these?"

Eleanor's thought flew instantly to two or three such families among her poor friends; for she was a good deal of a Lady Bountiful, as far as moderate means and large sympathy could go; and knew many of the lower classes in her neighbourhood; but again she struggled with two feelings, for the question had been put not in a

tone of compliment but with a manner of simple consultation. She flushed and hesitated, until it was put again.

"I know several, I think, that you would not dislike to have here, and that would be very glad to come, Mr. Carlisle."

"Who are they?"

"One is Mrs. Benson, who lives on nothing with her family of eight children, and brings them up well."

Mr. Carlisle took out his note-book.

"Another is Joe Shepherd and his wife; but they are an old couple; perhaps you do not want old people here?"

He looked up from his note-book with a little smile, which brought the blood tingling to Eleanor's brow again, and effectually drove away all her ideas. She was very vexed with herself; she was never used to be so troubled with blushing. She turned away.

"Suppose you sit down," said he, taking her hands and placing her in a chair by the window. "You must have some refreshment, I think, before we go any further." He left the cottage, and Eleanor looked out of the open casement, biting her lips. The air came in with such a sweet breath from the heathery moor, it seemed to blow vexation away. Yet Eleanor was vexed. Here she was making admissions with every breath, when she would fain have not made any. She wanted her old liberty, and to dispose of it at her leisure if at all; and at least not to have it *taken* from her. But here was Mr. Carlisle at her elbow again, and one of his servants bringing dishes and glasses. The meats were spread on the little table before which Eleanor sat, and Mr. Carlisle took another chair.

"We will honour the house for once," he said smiling; "the future shall be as the occupants deserve. Is this one to belong to some of your protégés?"

"I have not the gift of foresight," said Eleanor.

"You have another sort of gift which will do quite as well. If you have any choice, choose the houses in which Joe Shepherd, and Mrs. Benson, and anybody else, shall thank you—and I will order the doors marked. Which do you prefer?"

Eleanor was forced to speak. "I think this is one of the pleasantest situations," she said flushing deeply again; "but the house highest up the valley——"

"What of it?" said Mr. Carlisle, smiling at her.

"That would be best for Joe Shepherd, because of his business. It is nearer the common."

"Joe Shepherd shall have it. Now will you do me the favour to eat that," said he putting a piece of cold game on her plate. "Do not look at it, but eat it. Your day's labour is by no means over."

It was easier to eat than to do nothing; and easier to look at her plate than where her carnations gleamed on that white breast-ground. So Eleanor eat obediently.

"The day is so uncommonly fine, how would you like to walk down the valley as far as the old priory, and let the horses meet us there?"

"I am willing"—said Eleanor. Which she was, only because she was ashamed or afraid to say that she wanted to gallop back by the moor, the same way she had come. A long walk down the valley would give fine opportunity for all that she dreaded in the way of conversation. However, the order was given about the horses, and the walk began.

The way was at first a continuation of the valley in which the cottages were situated; uncultivated, sweet, and wild. They were a good distance beyond Barton's tower. The stream of the Ryth, not so large as it became further down, sparkled along in a narrow meadow, beset with flowers. Here and there a rude bridge crossed it; and the walkers passed as they listed from

side to side, wandering down the valley at great leisure, remarking upon all sorts of things except what Eleanor was dreading. The walk and talk went on without anything formidable. Mr. Carlisle seemed to have nothing on his mind; and Eleanor, full of what was on hers, only felt through his quiet demeanour that he was taking things for granted in a very cool way. She was vexed and irritated, and at the same time subdued. And then an opposite feeling would stir, of pleasure and pride, at the place she was taking and the relations she was assuming to the beautiful domain through which they wandered. As they went down the valley it grew more and more lovely. Luxuriant growths of ash and oak, mingled with larches, crowned the rising borders of the valley and crept down their sides, hanging a most exquisite clothing of vegetation over the banks which had hitherto been mostly bare. As they went, from point to point and in one after another region of beauty, her companion's talk, quietly flowing on, called her attention to one and another observation suggested by what they were looking at; not as if it were a foreign matter, but with a tacit intimation that it concerned her or had a right to her interest. It was a long walk. They were some time before reaching the old tower; then a long stretch of beautiful scenes lay between them and the old priory ruins. This part of the valley was in the highest degree picturesque. The sides drew together, close and rocky and overshadowed with a thicket of trees. The path of the river became steep and encumbered; the way along its banks grew comparatively rough and difficult. The day was delicious, without even a threatening of rain; yet the sun in some places was completely shut out from the water by the overgrown, overhanging sides of rock and wood which shut in the dell. Conversation was broken here, by the pleasant difficulty of pursuing the way. Here too flowers were sweet and the birds

busy. The way was enough to delight any lover of nature; and it was impossible not to be delighted. Nevertheless Eleanor hailed for a sake not its own, every bit of broken ground and rough walking that made connected conversation impossible; and then was glad to see the grey walls of the priory, where the horses were to meet them. Once in the saddle again—she would be glad to be there!

The horses were not in sight yet; they strolled into the ruin. It was lovely to-day; the sunlight adding its brightening touch to all that moss and ivy and lichen and fern had done. They sauntered up what had been an aisle of the church; carpeted now with soft shaven turf, close and smooth.

“The priory was founded a great while ago,” said Mr. Carlisle, “by one of the first Lords of Rythdale, on account of the fact that he had slain his own brother in mortal combat. It troubled his mind, I suppose, even in those rough times.”

“And he built the church to soothe it.”

“Built the church and founded the establishment; gave it all the lands we have passed through to-day, and much more; and great rights on hill and dale and moor. We have them nearly all back again—by one happy chance and another.”

“What was this?” said Eleanor, seating herself on a great block of stone, the surface of which was rough with decay.

“This was a tombstone—tradition says, of that same slain Lord of Rythdale—but I think it very hypothetical. However, your fancy can conjure back his image, if you like, lying where you sit; covered with the armour he lived his life in, and probably with hands joined to make the prayers his life had rendered desirable.”

“He had not the helmet—” thought Eleanor. She got up to look at the stone; but it was worn away; no

trace of the knight in armour who had lain there was any longer to be seen. What long ago times those were!

"And then the old monks did nothing else but pray," she remarked.

"A few other things," said her companion; "if report is true. But they said a great many prayers, it is certain. It was what they were specially put here for—to do masses for that old stone figure that used to lie there. They were paid well for doing it. I hope they did it."

The wind stirred gently through the ruin, bringing a sweet scent of herbs and flowers, and a fern or an ivy leaf here and there just moved lightly on its stalk.

"They must have lived a pleasant sort of life," said Eleanor musingly,— "in this beautiful place!"

"Are you thinking of entering a monastery?" said her companion smiling. It brought back Eleanor's consciousness, which had been for a moment forgotten, and the deep colour flashed to her face. She stood confused. Mr. Carlisle did not let her go this time; he took both her hands.

"Do you think I am going to be satisfied with only negative answers from you?" said he changing his tone. "What have you got to say to me?"

Eleanor struggled with herself. "Nothing, Mr. Carlisle."

"Your mother has conveyed to you my wishes?"

"Yes," said Eleanor softly.

"What are yours?"

She hesitated, held at bay, but he waited; and at last with a little of her frank daring breaking out, she said, still in her former soft voice, "I would let things alone."

"Suppose that could not be,—would you send me away, or let me come near to you?"

Eleanor could not send him away; but he would not come near. He stood keeping her hands in a light firm

grasp ; she felt that he knew his hold of her ; her head bowed in confusion.

"Speak, darling," he said. "Are you mine?"

Eleanor shrank lower and lower from his observation ; but she answered in a whisper,—*"I suppose so."*

Her hands were released then, only to have herself taken into more secure possession. She had given herself up ; and Mr. Carlisle's manner said that to touch her cheek was his right as well as his pleasure. Eleanor could not dispute it ; she knew that Mr. Carlisle loved her, but she certainly thought the sense of power had great charms for him. So she presently thought, had the exercise of it.

"You are mine now," he said,—*"you are mine. You are Eleanor Carlisle. But you have not said a word to me. What is my name?"*

"Your name!" stammered Eleanor,—*"Carlisle."*

"Yes, but the rest?"

"I know it," said Eleanor.

"Speak it, darling?"

Now Eleanor had no mind to speak that or anything else upon compulsion ; it should be a grace from her lips, not the compliance with a requisition ; her spirit of resistance sprung up. A frank refusal was on her tongue, and her head which had been drooping was thrown back with an infinitely pretty air of defiance, to give it. Thus she met Mr. Carlisle's look ; met the bright hazel eyes that were bent upon her, full of affection and smiling, but with something else in them as well ; there was a calm power of exaction. Eleanor read it, even in the half glance which took in incongruously the graceful figure and easy attitude ; she did not feel ready for contention with Mr. Carlisle ; the man's nature was dominant over the woman's. Eleanor's head stooped again ; she spoke obediently the required words.

"Robert Macintosh."

The kisses which met her lips before the words were well out, seemed to seal the whole transaction. Perhaps it was Eleanor's fancy, but to her they spoke unqualified content both with her opposition and her yielding. She was chafed with the consciousness that she had been obliged to yield; vexed to feel that she was not her own mistress; even while the kisses that stopped her lips told her how much love mingled with her captor's power. There was no questioning that fact; it only half soothed Eleanor.

Mr. Carlisle bade her sit down and rest, while he went to see if the horses were there. Eleanor sat down dreamily on the old tombstone, and in the space of three minutes went over whole fields of thought. Her mind was in a perverse state. Before her the old tower of the ruined priory rose in its time-worn beauty, with the young honours of the ivy clinging all about it; on either side of her stretched the grey, ivied and mossy, crumbling walls. It was a magnificent place; if not her own mistress, it was a pleasant thing to be mistress of such as that; and a vision of gay grandeur floated over her mind. Still, in contrast with that vision, the quiet, ruined priory tower spoke of a different life—brought up a separate vision; of unworldly possessions, aims, hopes, and occupations; it was not familiar to Eleanor's mind, yet now somehow it rose upon her, with the feeling of that once-wanted, still desired,—only she had forgotten it—armour of security. Why did she think of it now? was it because Eleanor's mind was in that disordered state which lets everything come to the surface by turns; or because she was still suffering from vexation, and her spirit chose contraries with a natural readiness and relish? It was not more than three minutes, but Eleanor travelled far in dream-land; so far that the sudden feeling of two hands upon her shoulders, brought her back with even a visible start. She was

rallied and laughed at ; then her hand was put upon Mr. Carlisle's arm and so Eleanor was walked out to where Black Maggie stood waiting for her. Of course she felt that her engagement was to be made known to all the world immediately. Mr. Carlisle's servant must know it now. It seemed to Eleanor that fine bands of cobwebs had been cast round her, binding her hands and feet, which loved their liberty. The feeling made one little imprudent burst. As Mr. Carlisle put Maggie's reins into her hand, he repeated what he had before said, that Eleanor should use her voice if the bridle failed to win obedience.

"She is not of a rebellious disposition," he added.

"Do you read dispositions ?" said Eleanor, gathering up the reins. He stood at her saddle-bow.

"Sometimes."

"Do you know mine ?"

"Partially."

"It is what you say Black Maggie's is not."

"Is it ? Take the reins a little shorter, Eleanor."

It is difficult to say how much there may be in two short words ; but as Mr. Carlisle went round to the other side and mounted, he left his little lady in a state of fume. Those two words said so plainly to Eleanor's ear, that her announcement was neither denied nor disliked. Nay, they expressed pleasure ; the sort of pleasure that a man has in a spirited horse of which he is master. It threw Eleanor's mind into a tumult, so great that for a minute or two she hardly knew what she was about. But for the sound, sweet good temper, which in spite of Eleanor's self-characterizing was part of her nature, she would have been in a rage. As it was, she only handled Black Maggie in a more stately style than she had cared about at the beginning of the ride ; putting her upon her paces ; and so rode through all the village, in a way that certainly pleased Mr. Carlisle, though he said noth-

ing about it. He contrived however to aid in the soothing work done by Black Maggie's steps, so that long before Ivy Lodge was reached Eleanor's smile came free and sweet again, and her lip lost its ominous curve.

"You are a darling!" Mr. Carlisle whispered as he took her down from her horse.

Eleanor went on into the drawing-room. He followed her. Nobody was there.

"What have you to say to me, Eleanor?" he said as he held her hand before parting.

"Nothing whatever, Mr. Carlisle." Eleanor's frank brilliant smile gleamed mischievously upon him.

"Will you not give me a word of kindness before I go?"

"No! Mr. Carlisle, if I had my own way," said Eleanor switching her riding-whip nervously about her habit,—“I would be my own mistress for a good while longer.”

"Shall I give you back your liberty?" said he, drawing her into his arms. Eleanor was silent. Their touch manifested no such intention. He bent his head lower and said softly, "Kiss me, Eleanor."

There was as before, just that mingling of affection and exaction which conquered her. She knew all she was giving, but she half dared not and half cared not to refuse.

"You little witch—" said he as he took possession of the just permitted lips,—“I will punish you for your naughtiness, by taking you home very soon—into my own management.”

Mrs. Powle was in Eleanor's room when she entered; waiting there for her.

"Well Eleanor," she began,—“is it settled? Are you to be Lady Rythdale?”

"If Mr. Carlisle has his will, ma'am."

"And what is *your* will?"

"I have none any longer. But if you and he try to hurry on the day, mamma, it shall never come,—never!"

Mrs. Powle thought she would leave that matter in more skilful hands; and went away well satisfied.

CHAPTER V.

*"This floating life hath but this port of rest,
A heart prepared, that fears no ill to come."*

THE matter was in skilful hands; for the days rolled on, after that eventful excursion, with great smoothness. Mr. Carlisle kept Eleanor busy, with some pleasant little excitement, every day varied. She was made to taste the sweets of her new position, and to depend more and more upon the hand that introduced her to them. Mr. Carlisle ministered carefully to her tastes. Eleanor daily was well mounted, generally on Maggie; and enjoyed her heart's delight of a gallop over the moor, or a more moderate pace through a more rewarding scenery. Mr. Carlisle entered into the spirit of her gardening pursuits; took her to his mother's conservatory; and found that he never pleased Eleanor better than when he plunged her into the midst of flowers. He took good care to advance his own interests all the time; and advanced them fast and surely. He had Eleanor's liking before; and her nature was too sweet and rich not to incline towards the person whom she had given such a position with herself, yielding to him more and more of faith and affection. And that in spite of what sometimes chafed her; the quiet sway she felt Mr. Carlisle had over her, beneath which she was powerless. Or rather, perhaps she inclined towards him secretly the more on account of it; for to women of rich natures there is something attractive in being obliged to look up; and to women of all natures it is imposing. So Mr. Car-

lisle's threat, by Eleanor so stoutly resisted and resented, was extremely likely to come to pass. Mrs. Powle was too wise to touch her finger to the game.

Several weeks went by, during which Eleanor had no chance to think of anything but Mr. Carlisle and the matters he presented for her notice. At the end of that time he was obliged to go up to London on sudden business. It made a great lull in the house; and Eleanor began to sit in her garden parlour again and dream. While dreaming one day, she heard the voice of her little sister sobbing at the door-step. She had not observed before that she was sitting there.

"Julia!" said Eleanor—"What is the matter?"

Julia would not immediately say, but then faltered out, "Mr. Rhys."

"Mr. Rhys! What of him?"

"He's sick. He's going to die, I know."

"How do you know he is sick? Come, stop crying, Julia, and speak. What makes you think he is sick?"

"Because he just lies on the sofa, and looks so white, and he can't keep school. He sent away the boys yesterday."

"Does he see the doctor?"

"No. I don't know. No, I know he don't," said Julia; "because the old woman said he ought to see him."

"What old woman, child?"

"His old woman—Mrs. Williams. And mamma said I might have some jelly and some sago for him—and there is nobody to take it. Foster is out of the way, and Jack is busy, and I can't get anybody."

Julia's tears were very sincere.

"Stop crying, child, and I will go with you myself. I have not had a walk to-day, or a ride, or anything. Come, get ready, and you and I will take it."

Julia did not wait even for thanks; she was never

given to be ceremonious ; but sprang away to do as her sister had said. In a few minutes they were off, going through the garden, each with a little basket in her hand. Julia's tears were exchanged for the most sunshiny gladness.

It was a sunshiny day altogether, in the end of summer, and the heat was sultry. Neither sister minded weather of any sort ; nevertheless they chose the shady side of the road and went very leisurely, along by the hedgerows and under the elms and beeches with which all the way to the village was more or less shaded. It was a long walk, even to the village. The cottage where Mr. Rhys had his abode was yet further on. The village must be passed on the way to it.

It was a long line of cottages, standing for the most part on one side the street only ; the sweet hedgerow on the other side only here and there broken by a white wicket gate. The houses were humble enough ; yet in universal neat order on the outside at least ; in many instances grown over with climbing roses and ivy, and overhung with deep thatched roofs. They stood scatteringly ; gardens and sometimes small crofts intervening ; and noble growth of old oaks and young elms shading the way ; the whole as neat, fresh, and picturesque in rural comfort and beauty, as could be seen almost anywhere in England. The lords of Rythdale held sway here, and nothing under their rule, of late, was out of order. But there were poor people in the village, and very poor old houses, though skilfully turned to the account of beauty in the outward view. Eleanor was well known in them ; and now Mrs. Benson came out to the gate and told how she was to move to her new home in another fortnight ; and begged the sisters would come in to rest themselves from the sun. And old Mrs. Shepherd curtsied in her doorway ; and Mat. Grimson's wife, the blacksmith that was, came to stop

Eleanor with a roundabout representation how her husband's business would thrive so much better in another situation. Eleanor was seldom on foot in the village now. She passed that as soon as she could and went on. From her window on the other side of the lane, Miss Broadus nodded, and beckoned too; but the sisters would not be delayed.

"It is good Mr. Carlisle has gone to London," said Julia. "He would not have let you come."

Eleanor felt stung.

"Why do you say so, Julia?"

"Why you always do what he tells you," said Julia, who was not apt to soften her communications. "He says 'Eleanor'—and you go that way; and he says 'Eleanor'—and you go the other way."

"And why do you suppose he would have any objection to my going this way?"

"I know"—said Julia. "I am glad he is in London. I hope he'll stay there."

Eleanor made no answer but to switch her dress and the bushes as they went by, with a little rod in her hand. There was more truth in the allegation than it pleased her to remember. She did not always feel her bonds at the time, they were so gently put on and the spell of another's will was so natural and so irresistible. But it chafed her to be reminded of it and to feel that it was so openly exerted and her own subjugation so complete. The switching went on vigorously, taking the bushes and her muslin dress impartially; and Eleanor's mind was so engrossed that she did not perceive how suddenly the weather was changing. They had passed through the village and left it behind, when Julia exclaimed, "There's a storm coming, Eleanor! maybe we can get in before it rains." It was an undeniable fact; and without further parley both sisters set off to run, seeing that there were

very few minutes to accomplish Julia's hope. It began sprinkling already.

"It's going to be a real storm," said Julia gleefully. "Over the moor it's as black as thunder. I saw it through the trees."

"But where are you going?—" For Julia had left the road, or rather lane, and dashed down a path through the trees leading off from it.

"O this is the best—this leads round to the other side of the house," Julia said.

Just as well, to go in at the kitchen, Eleanor thought; and let Julia find her way with her sago and jelly to Mr. Rhys's room if she so inclined. So they ran on, reached a little strip of open ground at the back of the cottage, and rushed in at the door like a small tornado; for the rain was by this time coming down merrily.

The first thing Eleanor saw when she had pulled off her flat,—was that she was not in a kitchen. A table with writing implements met her eye; and turning, she discovered the person one of them at least had come to see, lying on a sort of settee or rude couch, with a pillow under his head. He looked pale enough, and changed, and lay wrapped in a dressing-gown. If Eleanor was astonished, so certainly was he. But he rose to his feet, albeit scarce able to stand, and received his visitors with a simplicity and grace of nature which was in singular contrast with all the dignities of conventional life.

"Mr. Rhys!" stammered Eleanor, "I had no idea we were breaking into your room. I thought Julia was taking me into Mrs. Williams's part of the house."

"I am very glad to see you!" he said; and the words were endorsed by the pleasant grave face and the earnest grasp of the hand. But how ill and thin he looked! Eleanor was shocked.

"It was beginning to rain," she repeated, "and I followed where Julia led me. I thought she was bringing me to Mrs. Williams's premises. I beg you will excuse me."

"I have made Mrs. Williams give me this part of the house because I think it is the pleasantest. Won't you do me the honour to sit down?"

He was bringing a chair for her, but looked so little able for it that Eleanor took it from his hand.

"Please put yourself on the sofa again, Mr. Rhys—We will not interrupt you a moment."

"Yes you will," said Julia, "unless you want to walk in the rain. Mr. Rhys, are you better to-day?"

"I am as well as usual, thank you, Julia."

"I am sorry to see that is not very well, Mr. Rhys," said Eleanor.

"Not very strong—" he said with the smile that she remembered, as he sank back in the corner of the couch and rested his head on his hand. His look and manner altogether gave her a strange feeling. Ill and pale and grave as he was, there was something else about him different from all that she had touched in her own life for weeks. It was a new atmosphere.

"Ladies, I hope you are not wet?" he said presently.

"Not at all," said Eleanor; "nothing to signify. We shall dry ourselves in the sun walking back."

"I think the sun is not going to be out immediately."

He rose and with slow steps made his way to the inner door and spoke to some one within. Eleanor took a view of her position. The rain was coming down furiously; no going home just yet was possible. That was the out-of-door prospect. Within, she was a prisoner. The room was a plain little room, plain as a room could be; with no adornments or luxuries. Some books were piled on deal shelves; others covered two tables. A large portfolio stood in one corner. On one of the

tables were pens, ink and paper, not lying loose, but put up in order; as not used nor wanted at present. Several boxes of various sorts and sizes made up the rest of the furniture, with a few chairs of very simple fashion. It was Mr. Rhys's own room they were in; and all that could be said of it was its nicety of order. Two little windows with the door might give view of something in fair weather; at present they shewed little but grey rain and a dim vision of trees seen through the rain. Eleanor wanted to get away; but it was impossible. She must talk.

"You cannot judge of my prospect now," Mr. Rhys said as she turned to him.

"Not in this rain. But I should think you could not see much at any time, except trees."

"Much" is comparative. No, I do not see much; but there is an opening from my window, through which the eye goes a long way—across a long distance of the moor. It is but a gleam; however it serves a good purpose for me."

An old woman here came in with a bundle of sticks and began to lay them for a fire. She was an old-crone looking person. Eleanor observed her, and thought what it must be to have no nurse or companion but that.

"We have missed you at the Lodge, Mr. Rhys."

"Thank you. I am missing from all my old haunts,—"
he answered gravely. And the thought and the look went to something from which he was very sorry to be missing.

"But you will be soon well again—will you not? and among us again."

"I do not know," he said. "I am sometimes inclined to think my work is done."

"What work, Mr. Rhys?" said Julia. "Ferns, do you mean?"

"No."

"What work, Mr. Rhys?"

"I mean the Lord's work, Julia, which he has given me to do."

"Do you mean preaching?"

"That is part of it."

"What else is your work, Mr. Rhys?" said Julia, hanging about the couch with an affectionate eye. So affectionate, that her sister's rebuke of her forwardness was checked.

"Doing all I can, Julia, in every way, to tell people of the Lord Jesus."

"Was that the work you were going to that horrid place to do?"

"Yes."

"Then I am glad you are sick!"

"That is very unkind of you,—" said he with a gravity which Eleanor was not sure was real.

"It is better for you to be sick than to go away from England," said Julia decidedly.

"But if I am not well enough to go there, I shall go somewhere else."

"Where?"

"What have you got in that saucer?"

"Jelly for you. Won't you eat it, Mr. Rhys? There is sago in the basket. It will do you good."

"Will you not offer your sister some?"

"No. She gets plenty at home. Eat it, Mr. Rhys, won't you?"

He took a few spoonfuls, smiled at her, and told her it was very good. It was a smile worth having. But both sisters saw that he looked fearfully pale and worn.

"I must see if Mrs. Williams has not some berries to offer you," he said.

"Where are you going, Mr. Rhys, if you do not go to that place?" Julia persisted.

"If I do not go there, I think I shall go home."

"Home?"

"Yes."

"Where is that?" said Julia hanging about him.

"I meant my everlasting home, Julia."

"O don't, Mr. Rhys!" cried the child in a half vexed tone. "Eat some more jelly—do!"

"I am very willing to stay, Julia, if my Master has work for me to do."

"You had charge of a chapel at Lily Dale, Mr. Rhys, I am told?" Eleanor said, feeling awkward.

"No—at Croydon, beyond."

"At Croydon! that is nine miles off. How did you get there?"

The question escaped Eleanor. He hesitated, and answered simply, "I had no way but to walk. I found that very pleasant in summer mornings."

"Walk to Croydon and back and preach there! I do not wonder you are sick, Mr. Rhys."

"I did not walk back the same day."

"But then where did you go in the evenings to preach?" said Julia.

"That was not so far off."

"Did you serve *two* chapels on the same day, Mr. Rhys?" Eleanor asked.

"No. The evenings Julia speaks of I preached nearer home."

"And school all the week!" said Eleanor.

"It was no hardship," he said with a most pleasant smile at her. "The King's work required haste—there were many people at both places who had not heard the truth or had not learned to love it. There are still."

His face grew very grave as he spoke; grave even to sadness as he added, "They are dying without the knowledge of the true life!"

"Where was the other chapel you went to?"

"Rythmoor."

Eleanor hurried on. "But Mr. Rhys, will you allow me to ask you a question that puzzles me?"

"I beg you will do so!"

"It is just this. If there are so many in England that want teaching—But I beg your pardon! I am afraid talking tires you."

"I assure you it is very pleasant to me. Will you go on."

"If there are so many in England that want teaching, why should you go to such a place as that Julia talks of?"

"They are further yet from help."

"But is not the work here as good as the work there?"

"I am cut off from both," he said. "I long to go to them. But the Lord has his own plans. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul; and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God!'"

The grave, sweet, tender, strong intonation of these words, slowly uttered, moved Eleanor much. Not towards tears; the effect was rather a great shaking of heart. She saw a glimpse of a life she had never dreamed of; a power touched her that had never touched her before. This life was something quite unearthly in its spirit and aims; the power was the power of holiness.

It is difficult or impossible to say in words how this influence made itself felt. In the writing of the lines of the face, in the motion of the lips, in the indefinable tones of voice, in the air and manner, there comes out constantly in all characters an atmosphere of the truth, which the words spoken, whether intended or not intended, do not convey. Even unintentional feigning fails here, and even self-deception is belied. The truth of a character will make itself felt and influential, for good

or evil, through all disguises. So it was, that though the words of Mr. Rhys might have been said by anybody, the impression they produced belonged to him alone, or all the people Eleanor had ever seen in her life. The "helmet of salvation" was on this man's head, and gave it a dignity more than that of a kingly crown. She sat thinking so, and recalling her lost wishes of the early summer; forgetting to carry on the conversation.

Meanwhile the old woman of the cottage came in again with a fresh supply of sticks, and a blaze began to brighten in the chimney. Julia exclaimed in delight. Eleanor looked at the window. The rain still came down heavily. She remembered the thunderstorm in June, and her fears. Then Mr. Rhys begged her to go to the fire and dry herself, and again spoke some unintelligible words to the old attendant.

"What is that, Mr. Rhys?" said Julia, who seldom refrained from asking anything she wished to know.

"I was enquiring of Mrs. Williams whether she had not some fresh gathered berries she could bring for your refreshment."

"But I mean, what language did you speak to her?"

"Welsh."

"Are you Welsh?"

"No," said he smiling; "but I have Welsh blood; and I had a Welsh nurse, Julia."

"I do not want any refreshment, Mr. Rhys; but I would like some berries."

"I hope you would like to ask pardon of Mr. Rhys for your freedom," said Eleanor. "I am sure you need it."

"Why Mrs. Williams very often gives me berries," said Julia; "and they always taste better than ours. I mean, Mr. Rhys gives me some."

Eleanor busied herself over the fire, in drying her muslin dress. That did very well instead of talking.

Mrs. Williams presently came in again, bearing a little tray with berries and a pot of cream. Julia eagerly played hostess and dealt them out. The service was most homely ; nevertheless the wild berries deserved her commendation. The girls sat by the fire and eat, and their host from the corner of his couch watched them with his keen eyes. It was rather a romantic adventure altogether, Eleanor thought, in the midst of much graver thoughts. But Julia had quite got her spirits up.

"Aren't they good, Eleanor ? They are better berries than those that came from the Priory. Mr. Rhys, do you know that after Eleanor is Mrs. Carlisle, she will be Lady Rythdale ?"

This shot drove Eleanor into desperation. She would have started aside, to hide her cheeks, but it was no use. Mr. Rhys had risen to add some more cream to her saucer—perhaps on purpose.

"I understand," he said simply. "Has she made arrangements to secure an everlasting crown, after the earthly coronet shall have faded away ?"

The question was fairly put to Eleanor. It gave a turn to her confusion, yet hardly more manageable ; for the gentle, winning tones in which it was made found their way down to some very deep and unguarded spot in her consciousness. No one had ever probed her as this man dared to do. Eleanor could hardly sit still. The berries had no more any taste to her after that. Yet the question demanded an answer ; and after hesitating long she found none better than to say, as she set down her saucer,

"No, Mr. Rhys."

Doubtless he read deeper than the words of her answer, but he made no remark. She would have been glad he had.

The shower seemed to be slackening ; and while Julia entered into lively conversation over her berries, Eleanor

went to the window. She was doubtfully conscious of anything but discomfort; however she did perceive that the rain was falling less thickly and light beginning to break through the clouds. As she turned from the window she forced herself to speak.

"What is there we can do for you at home, Mr. Rhys? Mrs. Williams' resources, I am sure, must be very insufficient."

"I am very much obliged to you!" he said heartily. "There is nothing that I know of. I have all that I require."

"You are better than you were? you are gaining strength?"

"No, I think not. I am quite useless now."

"But you will get better soon and be useful again."

"If it pleases my Master;—but I think not."

"Do you consider yourself so seriously ill, Mr. Rhys?" said Eleanor looking shocked.

"Do not take it so seriously," said he smiling at her. "No harm can come to me any way. It is far worse than death for me, to be cut off from doing my work; and a while ago the thought of this troubled me; it gave me some dark hours. But at last I rested myself on that word, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? Hope thou in God!' and now I am content about it. Life or death—neither can bring but good to me; for my Father sends it. You know," he said, again with a smile at her but with a keen observant eye,—“they who are the Lord's wear an invisible casque, which preserves them from all fear.”

He saw that Eleanor's face was grave and troubled; he saw that at this last word there was a sort of avoidance of feature, as if it reached a spot of feeling somewhere that was sensitive. He added nothing more, except the friendly grasp of the hand, which drove the weapon home.

The rain had ceased; the sun was out; and the two girls set forward on their return. They hurried at first, for the afternoon had worn away. The rain drops lay thick and sparkling on every blade of grass, and dripped upon them from the trees.

"Now you will get your feet wet again," said Julia; "and then you will have another sickness; and Mr. Carlisle will be angry."

"Do let Mr. Carlisle's anger alone!" said Eleanor. "I shall not sit down in wet shoes, so I shall not get hurt. Did you ever see him angry?"

"No," said Julia; "and I am glad he won't be angry with me?"

In spite of her words, the wet grass gave Eleanor a disagreeable reminder of what wet grass had done for her some months before. The remembrance of her sickness came up with the immediate possibility of its returning again; the little feeling of danger and exposure gave power to the things she had just heard. She could not banish them; she recalled freshly the miserable fear and longing of those days when she lay ill and knew not how her illness would turn; the fearful want of a shelter; the comparative littleness of all things under the sun. Rythdale Priory had not been worth a feather in that day; all the gay pleasures and hopes of the summer could have found no entrance into her heart then. And as she was then, so Eleanor knew herself now—defenceless, if danger came. And the wet grass into which every footstep plunged said that danger might be at any time very near. Eleanor wished bitterly that she had not come this walk with Julia. It was strange, how utterly shaken, miserable, forlorn, her innermost spirit felt, at this possible approach of evil to her shelterless head. And with double force, though they had been forcible at the time, Mr. Rhys's words recurred to her—the words that he had spoken half to himself as it were—"Hope

thou in God." Eleanor had heard those words, read by different lips, at different times; they were not new; but the meaning of them had never struck her before. Now for the first time, as she heard the low, sweet, confident utterance of a soul fleeing to its stronghold, of a spirit absolutely secure there, she had an idea of what "hope in God" meant; and every time she remembered the tones of those words, spoken by failing lips too, it gave a blow to her heart. There was something she wanted. What else could be precious like that? And with them belonged in this instance, Eleanor felt, a purity of character till now unimagined. Thoughts and footsteps hurrying along together, they were past the village and far on their way towards home, the two sisters, before much was said between them.

"I wish Mr. Rhys would get well and stay here," said Julia. "It is nice to go to see him, isn't it, Eleanor? He is so good."

"I don't know whether it is nice," said Eleanor. "I wish almost I had not gone with you. I have not thought of disagreeable things before in a great while."

"But isn't he good?"

"Good!" said Eleanor. "He makes me feel as black as night."

"Well you aren't black," said Julia, pleased; "and I'll tell Mr. Carlisle what you say. He won't be angry that time."

"Julia!" said Eleanor. "Do if you dare! You shall repeat no words of mine to Mr. Carlisle."

Julia only laughed; and Eleanor hoped that the gentleman would stay in London till her purpose, whatever it might be, was forgotten. He did stay some days; the Lodge had a comparatively quiet time. Perhaps Eleanor missed the constant excitement of the weeks past. She was very restless, and her thoughts would not be diverted from the train into which the visit to

Mr. Rhys had thrown them. Obstinate the idea kept before her, that a defence was wanting to her which she had not, and might have. She wanted some security greater than dry shoes could afford. Yea, she could not forget, that beyond that earthly coronet which of necessity must some time fade, she might want something that would endure in the air of eternity. Her musings troubled Eleanor. As Black Maggie did not wait upon her, these days, she ordered up her own little pony, and went off upon long rides by herself. It soothed her to be alone. She let no servant attend her; she took the comfort of good stirring gallops all over the moor; and then when she and the pony were both tired she let him walk and her thoughts take up their train. But it did not do her any good. Eleanor grew only more uneasy from day to day. The more she thought, the deeper her thoughts went; and still the contrast of purity and high Christian hope rose up to shame her own heart and life. Eleanor felt her danger as a sinner; her exposure as guilty; and the insufficiency of all she had or hoped for, to meet future and coming contingencies. So far she got; there she stopped; except that her sense of these things grew more keen and deep day by day; it did not fade out. Friends she had none to help her. She wanted to see Dr. Cairnes and attack him in private and bring him to a point on the subjects which agitated her; but she could not. Dr. Cairnes too was absent from Wiglands at this time; and Eleanor had to think and wait all by herself. She had her Bible, it is true; but she did not know how to consult it. She took care not to go near Mr. Rhys again; though she was sorry to hear through Julia that he was not mending. She wished herself a little girl, to have Julia's liberty; but she must do without it. And what would Mr. Carlisle say to her thoughts? She must not ask him. He could

do nothing with them. She half feared, half wished for his influence to overthrow them.

He came; but Eleanor did not find that he could remove the trouble, the existence of which he did not suspect. His presence did not remove it. In all her renewed engagements and gayeties, there remained a secret core of discomfort in her heart, whatever she might be about.

They were taking tea one evening, half in and half out of the open window, when Julia came up.

"Mr. Carlisle," said she, "I am going to pay you my forfeit." He had caught her in some game of forfeits the day before. "I am going to give you something you will like very much."

"What can it be, Julia?"

"You don't believe me. Now you do not deserve to have it. I am going to give you something Eleanor said."

Eleanor's hand was on her lips immediately and her voice forbade the promised forfeit; but there were two words to that bargain. Mr. Carlisle captured the hand and gave a counter order.

"Now you don't believe me, but you believe Eleanor," said the lawless child. "She said,—she said it when you went away,—that she had not thought of anything disagreeable in a long while!"

Mr. Carlisle looked delighted, as well he might. Eleanor's temples flushed a painful scarlet.

"Dear me, how interesting these goings away and comings home are, I suppose!" exclaimed Miss Broadus, coming up to the group. "I see! there is no need to say anything. Mr. Carlisle, we are all rejoiced to see you back at Wiglands. Or at the Lodge—for you do not honour Wiglands much, except when I see you riding through it on that beautiful brown horse of yours. The black and the brown; I never saw such a pair. And

you do ride ! I should think you would be afraid that creature would lose a more precious head than its own."

" I take better care than that, Miss Broadus."

" Well, I suppose you do ; though for my part I cannot see how a person on one horse can take care of a person on another horse ; it is something I do not understand. I never did ride myself ; I suppose that is the reason. Mr. Carlisle, what do you say to this lady riding all alone by herself—without any one to take care of her ?"

Mr. Carlisle's eyes rather opened at this question, as if he did not fully take in the idea.

" She does it—you should see her going by as I did—as straight as a grenadier, and her pony on such a jump ! I thought to myself, Mr. Carlisle is in London, sure enough. But it was a pretty sight to see. My dear, how sorry we are to miss some one else from our circle, and he did honour us at Wiglands—my sister and me. How sorry I am poor Mr. Rhys is so ill. Have you heard from him to-day, Eleanor ?"

" You should ask Julia, Miss Broadus. Is he much more ill than he was ? Julia hears of him every day, I believe."

" Ah, the children all love him. I see Julia and Alfred going by very often ; and the other boys come to see him constantly, I believe. And my dear Eleanor, how kind it was of you to go yourself with something for him ! I saw you and Julia go past with your basket—don't you remember ?—that day before the rain ; and I said to myself, no, I said to Juliana, some very complimentary things about you. Benevolence has flourished in your absence, Mr. Carlisle. Here was this lady, taking jelly with her own hands to a sick man. Now I call that beautiful."

Mr. Carlisle preferred to make his own compliments ; for he did not echo those of the talkative lady.

"But I am afraid he is very ill, my dear," Miss Broadus went on, turning to Eleanor again. "He looked dreadfully when I saw him; and he is so feeble, I think there is very little hope of his life left. I think he has just worked himself to death. But I do not believe, Eleanor, he is any more afraid of death, than I am of going to sleep. I don't believe he is so much."

Miss Broadus was called off; Mr. Carlisle had left the window; Eleanor sat sadly thinking. The last words had struck a deeper note than all the vexations of Miss Broadus's previous talk. "No more afraid of death than of going to sleep." Ay! for his head was covered from danger. Eleanor knew it—saw it—felt it; and felt it to be blessed. Oh how should she make that same covering her own? There was an engagement to spend the next afternoon at the Priory—the whole family. Dr. Cairnes would most probably be there to meet them. Perhaps she might catch or make an opportunity of speaking to him in private and asking him what she wanted to know. Not very likely, but she would try. Dr. Cairnes was her pastor; it ought to be in his power to resolve her difficulties; it must be. At any rate, Eleanor would apply to him and see. She had no one else to apply to. Unless Mr. Rhys would get well. Eleanor wished that might be. *He* could help her, she knew, without a peradventure.

Mr. Carlisle appeared again, and the musings were banished. He took her hand and put it upon his arm and drew her out into the lawn. The action was caressingly done; nevertheless Eleanor felt that an inquiry into her behaviour would surely be the next thing. So half shrinking and half rebellious, she suffered herself to be led on into the winding walks of the shrubbery. The evening was delicious; nothing could be more natural or pleasant than sauntering there.

"I am going to have Julia at the Priory to-morrow,

as a reward for her good gift to me," was Mr. Carlisle's opening remark.

"I am sure she does not deserve it," said Eleanor very sincerely.

"What do you deserve?"

"Nothing—in the way of rewards."

Mr. Carlisle did not think so, or else regarded the matter in the light of a reward to himself.

"Have you been good since I have been away?"

"No!" said Eleanor bluntly.

"Do you always speak truth after this fashion?"

"I speak it as you will find it, Mr. Carlisle."

The questions were put between caresses; but in all his manner nevertheless, in kisses and questions alike, there was that indefinable air of calm possession and power, before which Eleanor always felt unable to offer any resistance. He made her now change "Mr. Carlisle" for a more familiar name, before he would go on. Eleanor felt as a colt may be supposed to feel, which is getting a skilful "breaking in;" yielding obedience at every step, and at every step secretly wishing to refuse obedience, to refuse which is becoming more and more impossible.

"Haven't you been a little too good to somebody else, while I have been away?"

"No!" said Eleanor. "I never am."

"Darling, I do not wish you to honour any one so far as that woman reports you to have done."

"That?" said Eleanor. "That was the merest act of common kindness—Julia wanted some one to go with her to take some things to a sick man; and I wanted a walk, and I went."

"You were too kind. I must unlearn you a little of your kindness. You are mine, now, darling; and I want all of you for myself."

"But the better I am," said Eleanor, "I am sure the more there is to have."

"Be good for *me*," said he kissing her,— "and in my way. I will dispense with other goodness. I am in no danger of not having enough in you."

Eleanor walked back to the house, feeling as if an additional barrier were somehow placed between her and the light her mind wanted and the relief her heart sought after.

CHAPTER VI.

"Here he lives in state and bounty,
Lord of Burleigh, fair and free;
Not a lord in all the county
Is so great a lord as he."

LADY RYTHDALE abhorred dinner-parties, in general and in particular. She dined early herself, and begged that the family from Ivy Lodge would come to tea. It was the first occasion of the kind; and the first time they had ever been there, otherwise than as strangers visiting the grounds. Lady Rythdale was infirm and unwell, and never saw her country neighbours or interchanged civilities with them. Of course this was laid to something more than infirmity, by the surrounding gentry who were less in consequence than herself; but however it were, few of them ever saw the inside of the Priory House for anything but a ceremonious morning visit. Now the family at the Lodge were to go on a different footing. It was a great time, of curiosity, pleasure, and pride.

"What are you going to wear this evening, Eleanor?" her mother asked.

"I suppose, my habit, mamma."

"Your habit!"

"I cannot very well ride in anything else."

"Are you going to *ride*?"

"So it is arranged, ma'am. It will be infinitely less tiresome than going in any other way."

"Tiresome!" echoed Mrs. Powle. "But what will Lady Rythdale say to you in a riding-habit."

"Mamma, I have very little notion what she would say to me in anything."

"I will tell you what you must do, Eleanor. You must change your dress after you get there."

"No, mamma—I cannot. Mr. Carlisle has arranged to have me go in a riding-habit. It is his responsibility. I will not have any fuss of changing, nor pay anybody so much of a compliment."

"It will not be liked, Eleanor."

"It will follow my fate, mamma, whatever that is."

"You are a wilful girl. You are fallen into just the right hands. You will be managed now, for once."

"Mamma," said Eleanor colouring all over, "it is extremely unwise in you to say that; for it rouses all the fight there is in me; and some day—"

"Some day it will not break out," said Mrs. Powle.

"Well, I should not like to fight with Mr. Carlisle," said Julia. "I am glad I am going, at any rate."

Eleanor bit her lip. Nevertheless, when the afternoon came and Mr. Carlisle appeared to summon her, nothing was left of the morning's irritation but a little loftiness of head and brow. It was very becoming; no more; and Mr. Carlisle's evident pleasure and satisfaction soon soothed the feeling away. The party in the carriage had gone on before; the riders followed the same route, passing through the village of Wiglands, then a couple of miles or more beyond through the village of Rythdale. Further on, crossing a bridge, they entered upon the old priory grounds; the grey tower rose before them, and the horses' feet swept through the beautiful wilderness of ruined art and flourishing nature. As the cavalcade wound along, for the carriage was just before them now, through the dale and past the ruins, and as it had gone in state through the village, Eleanor could not help a little throbbing of heart at the sense of the place she was holding and about to hold; at the feeling of the

relation all these beauties and dignities now held to her. If she had been inclined to forget it, her companion's look would have reminded her. She had no leisure to analyze her thoughts, but these stirred her pulses. It was beautiful, as the horses wound through the dale and by the little river Ryth, where all the ground was kept like a garden. It was beautiful, as they left the valley and went up a slow, gentle, ascending road, through thick trees, to the higher land where the new Priory stood. It stood on the brow of the height, looking down over the valley and over the further plain where the village nestled among its trees. Yes, and it was fine when the first sight of the house opened upon her, not coming now as a stranger, but as future mistress; for whom every window and gable and chimney had the mysterious interest of a future home. Would old Lady Rythdale like to see her there? Eleanor did not know; but felt easy in the assurance that Mr. Carlisle, who could manage everything, could manage that also. It was his affair.

The house shewed well as they drew towards it, among fine old trees. It was a new house; that is, it did not date further back than three generations. Like everything else about the whole domain, it gave the idea of perfect order and management. It was a spacious building, spreading out amply upon the ground, not rising to a great height; and built in a simple style of no particular name or pretensions; but massive, stately, and elegant. No unfinished or half realized idea; what had been attempted had been done, and done well. The house was built on three sides of a quadrangle. The side of approach by which the cavalcade had come, winding up from the valley, led them round past the front of the left wing. Mr. Carlisle made her draw bridle and fall a little behind the carriage.

"Do you like this view?" said he.

“Very much. I have never seen it before.”

He smiled at her, and again extending his hand drew Black Maggie's rein till he brought her to a slow walk. The carriage passed on out of sight. Eleanor would have remonstrated, but the view before her was lovely. Three gables, of unequal height, rose over that façade; the only ornamental part was in their fanciful but not elaborate mouldings. The lower story, stretching along the spread of a smooth little lawn, was almost masked with ivy. It embedded the large but perfectly plain windows, which reached so near the ground that one might step out from them; their clear amplitude was set in a frame of massive green. One angle especially looked as if the room within must be a nest of verdurous beauty. The ivy encased all the doorways or entrances on that side of the house; and climbing higher threatened to do for the story above what it had accomplished below; but perhaps some order had been taken about that, for in the main its course had been stayed at a certain stone moulding that separated the stories, and only a branch here and there had been permitted to shew what more it would like to do. One of the upper windows was partly encased; while its lace curtains gave an assurance that all its garnishing had not been left to nature. Eleanor could not help thinking it was a very lovely looking place for any woman to be placed in as her home; and her heart beat a little high.

“Do you not like it?” said Mr. Carlisle.

“Yes,—certainly!”

“What are you considering so attentively in Black Maggie's ears?”

Eleanor caused Maggie to prick up the said ears, by a smart touch of her whip. The horses started forward to overtake the carriage. Perhaps however Mr. Carlisle was fascinated—he might well be—by the present view he had of his charge; there was a blushing shy

grace observable about her which it was pretty to see and not common; and maybe he wanted the view to be prolonged. He certainly did not follow the nearest road, but turned off instead to a path which went winding up and down the hill and through plantations of wood, giving Eleanor views also, of a different sort; and so did not come out upon the front of the house till long after the carriage party had been safely housed. Eleanor found she was alone and was not to be sheltered under her mother's wing or any other; and her conductor's face was much too satisfied to invite comments. He swung her down from the saddle, allowed her to remove her cap, and putting her hand on his arm walked her into the drawing-room and the presence of his mother.

Eleanor had seen Lady Rythdale once before, in a stately visit which had been made at the Lodge; never except that one time. The old baroness was a dignified looking person, and gave her a stately reception now; rather stiff and cold, Eleanor thought; or careless and cold, rather.

"My dear," said the old lady, "have you come in a riding-habit? That will be very uncomfortable. Go to my dressing-room, and let Arles change it for something else. She can fit you. Macintosh, you shew her the way."

No questions were asked. Mr. Carlisle obeyed, putting Eleanor's hand on his arm again, and walked her off out of the room and through a gallery and up the stairs, and along another gallery. He walked fast. Eleanor felt exceedingly abashed and displeased and discomfited at this extraordinary proceeding, but she did not know how to resist it. Her compliance was taken for granted, and Mr. Carlisle was laughing at her discomfiture, which was easy enough to be seen. Eleanor's cheeks were glowing magnificently. "I suppose he feels

he has me in his own dominions now,"—she thought; and the thought made her very rebellious. Lady Rythdale too!

"Mr. Carlisle," she began, "there is really no occasion for all this. I am perfectly comfortable. I do not wish to alter my dress."

"What do you call me?" said he stopping short.

"Mr. Carlisle."

"Call me something else."

The steady bright hazel eyes which were looking at her asserted their power. In spite of her irritation and vexation she obeyed his wish, and asked him somewhat loftily, to take her back again to the company.

"Against my mother's commands? Do you not think they are binding on you, Eleanor?"

"No, I do not!"

"You will allow they are on me. My darling," said he laughing and kissing her, "you must submit to be displeased for your good." And he walked on again. Eleanor was conquered; she felt it, and chafed under it. Mr. Carlisle opened a door and walked her into an apartment, large and luxurious, the one evidently that his mother had designated. He rang the bell.

"Arles," said he, "find this lady something that will fit her. She wishes to change her dress. Do your best."

He went out and left Eleanor in the hands of the tire-woman. Eleanor felt utterly out of countenance, but powerless; though she longed to defy the maid and the mistress and say, "I will wear my own and nothing else." Why could she not say it? She did not like to defy the master.

So Arles had her way, and after one or two rapid glances at the subject of her cares and a moment's reflection on her introduction there, she took her cue. "Blushes like that are not for nothing," thought Arles;

"and when Mr. Macintosh says 'Do your best'—why, it is easy to see!"

She was quick and skilful and silent ; but Eleanor felt like a wild creature in harness. Her riding-dress went off—her hair received a touch, all it wanted, as the waiting maid said ; and after one or two journeys to wardrobes, Mrs. Arles brought out and proceeded to array Eleanor in a robe of white lawn, very flowing and full of laces. Yet it was simple in style, and Eleanor thought it useless to ask for a change ; although when the robing was completed she was dressed more elegantly than she had ever been in her life. She was sadly ashamed, greatly indignant, and mortified at herself ; that she should be so facile to the will of a person who had no right to command her. But if she was dissatisfied, Arles was not ; the deep colour in Eleanor's cheeks only relieved her white drapery to perfection ; and her beautiful hair and faultless figure harmonized with flowing folds and soft laces which can do so much for outlines that are not soft. Eleanor was not without a consciousness of this ; nevertheless, vanity was not her foible ; and her state of mind was anything but enviable when she left the dressing-room for the gallery. But Mr. Carlisle was there, to meet her and her mood too ; and Eleanor found herself taken in hand at once. He had a way of mixing affection with his power over her, in such a way as to soothe and overawe at the same time ; and before they reached the drawing-room now Eleanor was caressed and laughed into good order ; leaving nevertheless a little root of opposition in her secret heart, which might grow fast upon occasion.

She was taken into the drawing-room, set down and left, under Lady Rythdale's wing. Eleanor felt her position much more conspicuous than agreeable. The old baroness turned and surveyed her ; went on with the conversation pending, then turned and surveyed her again ;

looked her well over ; finally gave Eleanor some worsted to hold for her, which she wound ; nor would she accept any substitute offered by the gentlemen for her promised daughter-in-law's pretty hands and arms. Worse and worse. Eleanor saw herself now not only a mark for people's eyes, but put in an attitude as it were to be looked at. She bore it bravely ; with steady outward calmness and grace, though her cheeks remonstrated. No movement of Eleanor's did that. She played worsted reel with admirable good sense and skill, wisely keeping her own eyes on the business in hand, till it was finished ; and Lady Rythdale winding up the last end of the ball, bestowed a pat of her hand, half commendation and half raillery, upon Eleanor's red cheek ; as if it had been a child's. That was a little hard to bear ; Eleanor felt for a moment as if she could have burst into tears. She would have left her place if she had dared ; but she was in a corner of a sofa by Lady Rythdale, and nobody else near ; and she felt shy. She could use her eyes now upon the company.

Lady Rythdale was busied in conversation with one or two elderly ladies, of stately presence like herself, who were, as Eleanor gathered, friends of long date, staying at the Priory. They did not invite curiosity. She saw her mother with Mrs. Wycherly, the rector's sister, in another group, conversing with Dr. Cairnes and a gentleman unknown. Mr. Powle had found congeniality in a second stranger. Mr. Carlisle, far off in a window, one of those beautiful deep large windows, was very much engaged with some ladies and gentlemen likewise strange to Eleanor. Nobody was occupied with her ; and from her sofa corner she went to musing. The room and its treasures she had time to look at quietly ; she had leisure to notice how fine it was in proportions and adornments, and what luxurious abundance of everything that wealth buys and cultivation

takes pleasure in, had space to abound without the seeming of multiplicity. The house was as stately within as on the outside. The magnificence was new to Eleanor, and drove her somehow to musings of a very opposite character. Perhaps her unallayed spirit of opposition might have been with other causes at the bottom of this. However that were, her thoughts went off in a perverse train upon the former baronesses of Rythdale; the ladies lovely and stately who had inhabited this noble abode. Eleanor would soon be one of the line, moving in their place, where they had moved; lovely and admired in her turn; but their turn was over. What when hers should be?—could she keep this heritage for ever? It was a very impertinent thought; it had clearly no business with either place or time; but there it was, staring at Eleanor out of the rich cornices, and looking in at her from the magnificent plantations seen through the window. Eleanor did not welcome the thought; it was an intruder. The fact was that having once made entrance in her mind, the idea only seized opportunities to start up and assert its claims to notice. It was always lying in wait for her now; and on this occasion held its ground with great perverseness. Eleanor glanced again at Dr. Cairnes; no hope of him at present; he was busily engaged with a clever gentleman, a friend of Mr. Carlisle's and an Oxford man, and with Mr. Carlisle himself. Eleanor grew impatient of her thoughts; she wondered if anybody else had such, in all that company. Nobody seemed to notice her; and she meditated an escape both from her sofa corner and from herself to a portfolio near by, which promised a resource in the shape of engravings; but just as she was moving, Lady Rythdale laid a hand upon her lap.

“Sit still, my dear,” she said turning partly towards her,—“I want you by me. I have a skein of silk here I want wound for my work—a skein of green silk—here

it is ; it has tangled itself, I fear ; will you prepare it for me ?”

Eleanor took the silk, which was in pretty thorough confusion, and began the task of unravelling and untying, preparatory to its being wound. This time Lady Rythdale did not turn away ; she sat considering Eleanor, on whose white drapery and white fingers the green silk threads made a pretty contrast, while they left her helplessly exposed to that examining gaze. Eleanor felt it going all over her ; taking in all the details of her dress, figure and face. She could not help the blood mounting, though she angrily tried to prevent it. The green silk was in a great snarl. Eleanor bent her head over her task.

“ My dear, are you near-sighted ?”

“ No, madam !” said the girl, giving the old lady a moment’s view of the orbs in question.

“ You have very good eyes—uncommon colour,” said Lady Rythdale. “ Macintosh thinks he will have a good little wife in you ;—is it true ?”

“ I do not know, ma’am,” said Eleanor haughtily.

“ I think it is true. Look up here and let me see.” And putting her hand under Eleanor’s chin, she chucked up her face as if she were something to be examined for purchase. Eleanor felt in no amiable mood certainly, and her cheeks were flaming ; nevertheless the old lady coolly held her under consideration and even with a smile on her lips which seemed of satisfaction. Eleanor did not see it, for her eyes could not look up ; but she felt through all her nerves the kiss with which the examination was dismissed.

“ I think it is true,” the old baroness repeated. “ I hope it is true ; for my son would not be an easy man to live with on any other terms, my dear.”

“ I suppose its truth depends in a high degree upon

himself, madam," said Eleanor, very much incensed. "Does your ladyship choose to wind this silk now?"

"You may hold it. I see you have got it into order. That shews you possessed of the old qualification of patience.—Your hands a little higher.—My dear, I would not advise you to regulate your behaviour by anything in other people. Macintosh will make you a kind husband if you do not displease him; but he is one of those men who must obeyed."

Eleanor had no escape; she must sit holding the silk, a mark for Lady Rythdale's eyes and tongue. She sat drooping a little with indignation and shame, when Mr. Carlisle came up. He had seen from a distance the tint of his lady's cheeks and judged that she was going through some sort of an ordeal. But though he came to protect, he stood still to enjoy. The picture was so very pretty. The mother and son exchanged glances.

"I think you can make her do," said the baroness contentedly.

"Not as a permanent winding reel!" exclaimed Eleanor jumping up. "Mr. Carlisle, I am tired;—have the goodness to take this silk from my fingers."

And slipping it over the gentleman's astonished hands, before he had time quite to know what she was about, Eleanor left the pair to arrange the rest of the business between them, and herself walked off to one of the deep windows. She was engaged there immediately by Lord Rythdale, in civil conversation enough; then he introduced other gentlemen; and it was not till after a series of talks with one and another, that Eleanor had a minute to herself. She was sitting in the window, where an encroaching branch of ivy at one side reminded her of the elegant work it was doing round the corner. Eleanor would have liked to go through the house—or the grounds—if she might have got away alone and indulged herself in a good musing fit. How beautiful the

shaven turf looked under the soft sun's light! how stately stood old oaks and beeches here and there! how rich the thicker border of vegetation beyond the lawn! What beauty of order and keeping everywhere. Nothing had been attempted here but what the resources of the proprietors were fully equal to; the impression was of ample power to do more. While musing Eleanor's attention was attracted by Mr. Carlisle, who had stepped out upon the lawn with one or two of his guests, and she looked at the place and its master together. He suited it very well. He was an undeniably handsome man; his bearing graceful and good. Eleanor liked Mr. Carlisle, not the less perhaps that she feared him a little. She only felt a little wilful rebellion against the way in which she had come to occupy her present position. If but she might have been permitted to take her own time, and say yea for herself, without having it said for her, she would have been content. As it was, Eleanor was not very discontented. Her heart swelled with a secret satisfaction and some pride, as without seeing her the group passed the window and she was left with the sunlit lawn and beautiful old trees again. Close upon that feeling of pride came another thought. What when this earthly coronet should fade?—

“Dr. Cairnes,” said Eleanor seizing an opportunity,—“come here and sit down by me. I have not seen you in a great while.”

“You have not missed me, my dear lady,” said the doctor blandly.

“Yes I have,” said Eleanor. “I want to talk to you. I want you to tell me something.”

“How soon I am to make you happy? or help you to make somebody else happy? Well I shall be at your service any time about Christmas.”

“No, no!” said Eleanor colouring, “I want something very different. I am talking seriously, Dr. Cairnes. I

want you to tell me something. I want to know how I may be happy—for I am unhappy now.”

“You unhappy!” said the doctor. “I must talk to my friend Mr. Carlisle about that. We must call him in for counsel. What would he say, to your being unhappy? hey?”

He was there to speak for himself; there with a slight cloud on his brow too, Eleanor thought. He had come from within the room; she thought he was safe away in the grounds with his guests.

“Shall I break up this interesting conversation?” said he.

“It was growing very interesting,” said the doctor; “for this lady was just acknowledging to me that she is not happy. I give her over to you—this is a case beyond my knowledge and resources. Only, when I can do anything, I shall be most gratified at being called upon.”

The doctor rose up, shook himself, and left the field to Mr. Carlisle. Eleanor felt vexed beyond description, and very little inclined to call again upon Dr. Cairnes for anything whatever in any line of assistance. Her face burned. Mr. Carlisle took no notice; only laid his hand upon hers and said “Come!”—and walked her out of the room and on the lawn, and sauntered with her down to some of the thickly planted shrubbery beyond the house. There went round about upon the soft turf, calling Eleanor’s attention to this or that shrub or tree, and finding her very pleasant amusement; till the question in her mind, of what was coming now, had almost faded away. The lights and shadows stretched in long lines between the trees, and lay witchingly over the lawn. An opening in the plantations brought a fair view of it, and of the left wing of the house which Eleanor had admired, dark and rich in its mantle of ivy, while the light

gleamed on the edges of the ornamented gables above. It was a beautiful view. Mr. Carlisle paused.

"How do you like the house?" said he.

"I think I prefer the ruined old priory down yonder," said Eleanor.

"Do you still feel your attraction for a monastic life?"

"Yes!" said Eleanor colouring,—*"I think they must have had peaceable old lives there, with nothing to trouble them. And they could plant gardens as well as you can."*

"As the old ruins are rather uninhabitable, what do you think of entering a modern Priory?"

It pleased him to see the deep rich glow on Eleanor's cheek, and the droop of her saucy eyelids. No wonder it pleased him; it was a pretty thing to see; and he enjoyed it.

"You shall be Lady Abbess," he went on presently, "and make your own rules. I only stipulate that there shall be no Father Confessor except myself."

"I doubt your qualifications for that office," said Eleanor.

"Suppose you try me. What were you confessing to Dr. Cairnes just now in the window?"

"Nonsense, Robert!" said Eleanor. "I was talking of something you would not understand."

"You underrate me," said he coolly. "My powers of understanding are equal to the old gentleman's, unless I am mistaken in myself. What are you unhappy about, darling?"

"Nothing that you could make anything of," said Eleanor. "I was talking to Dr. Cairnes in a language that you do not understand. Do let it alone!"

"Did he report you truly, to have used the English word 'unhappy'?"

"Yes," said Eleanor; "but Mr. Carlisle, you do not know what you are talking about."

"I am coming to it. Darling, do you think you would be unhappy at the Priory?"

"I did not say that—" said Eleanor, confused.

"Do you think I could make you happy there?—Speak, Eleanor—speak.

"Yes—if I could be happy anywhere."

"What makes you unhappy? My wife must not hide her heart from me."

"Yes, but I am not that yet," said Eleanor with spirit, rousing up to assert herself.

He laughed and kissed her. "How long first, Eleanor?"

"I am sure I don't know. Very long."

"What is very long?"

"I do not know. A year or two at least."

"Do you suppose I will agree to that?"

Eleanor knew he would not; and further saw a quiet purpose in his face. She was sure he had fixed upon the time, if not the day. She felt those cobweb bands all around her. Here she was, almost in bridal attire, at his side already. She made no answer.

"Divide by twelve, and get a quotient, Eleanor."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean to have a merry Christmas—by your leave."

Christmas! that was what the doctor had said. Was it so far without her leave? Eleanor felt angry. That did not hinder her feeling frightened.

"You cannot have it in the way you propose, Mr. Carlisle. I am not ready for that."

"You will be," he said coolly. "I shall be obliged to go up to London after Christmas; then I mean to instal you in Berkeley Square; and in the summer you shall go to Switzerland with me. Now tell me, my darling, what you are unhappy about?"

Eleanor felt tongue-tied and powerless. The last

words had been said very affectionately, and as she was silent they were repeated.

"It is nothing you would understand."

"Try me."

"It is nothing that would interest you at all."

"Not interest me!" said he; and if his manner had been self-willed, it was also now as tender and gentle as it was possible to be. He folded Eleanor in his arms caressingly and waited for her words. "Not interest me! Do you know that from your riding-cap to the very gloves you pull on and off, there is nothing that touches you that does not interest me. And now I hear my wife—she is almost that, Eleanor,—tell Dr. Cairnes that she is not happy. I must know why."

"I wish you would not think about it, Mr. Carlisle! It is nothing to care about at all. I was speaking to Dr. Cairnes as a clergyman."

"You shall not call me Mr. Carlisle. Say that over again, Eleanor."

"It is nothing to think twice about, Mr. Macintosh."

"You were speaking to Dr. Cairnes as a clergyman?" he said laughing. "How was that? I can think but of one way in which Dr. Cairnes' profession concerns you and me—was it on *that* subject, Eleanor?"

"No, no. It was only—I was only going to ask him a religious question that interested me."

"A *religious* question! Was it that which made you unhappy?"

"Yes, if you will have it. I knew you would not like it."

"I don't like it; and I will not have it," said he. *You*, my little Eleanor, getting up a religious uneasiness! that will never do. You, who are as sound as a nut, and as sweet as a Cape jessamine! I shall prove your best counsellor. You have not had rides enough over the moor lately. We will have an extra gallop to-

morrow;—and after Christmas I will take care of you. What were you uneasy about?”

“Don’t Robert!” said Eleanor,—“do not ask me any more about it. I do not want you to laugh at me.”

“Laugh at you!” he said. “I should like to see anybody else do that! but I will, as much as I like. Do you know you are a darling? and just as lovely in mind as you are in person. Do not you have any questions with the old priest; I do not like it; come to me with your difficulties, and I will manage them for you. Was that all, Eleanor?”

“Yes.”

“Then we are all right—or we soon shall be.”

They strolled a little longer over the soft turf, in the soft light.

“We are not quite all right,” said Eleanor; “for you think I will do—what I will not.”

“What is that?”

“I have not agreed to your arrangements.”

“You will.”

“Do not think it, Macintosh. I will not.”

He looked down at her, smiling, not in the least disconcerted. She had spoken no otherwise than gently, and with more secret effort than she would have liked him to know.

“You shall say that for half the time between now and Christmas,” he said; “and after that you will adopt another form of expression.”

“If I say it at all, I shall hold to it, Macintosh.”

“Then do not say it at all, my little Eleanor,” said he lightly; “I shall make you give it up. I think I will make you give it up now.”

“You are not generous, Robert.”

“No—I suppose I am not,” he said contentedly. “I am forced to go to London after Christmas, and I can-

not go without you. Do you not love me well enough to give me that, Eleanor?"

Eleanor was silent. She was not willing to say no; she could not with truth say yes. Mr. Carlisle bent down to look into her face.

"What have you to say to me?"

"Nothing—" said Eleanor avoiding his eye.

"Kiss me, Nellie, and promise that you will be my good little wife at Christmas."

His mother's very phrase. Eleanor rebelled secretly, but felt powerless under those commanding eyes. Perhaps he was aware of her latent obstinacy; if he was, he also knew himself able to master it; for the eyes were sparkling with pleasure as well as with wilfulness. The occasion was not sufficient to justify a contest with Mr. Carlisle; Eleanor was not ready to brave one; she hesitated long enough to shew her rebellion, and then yielded, ingloriously she felt, though on the whole wisely. She met her punishment. The offered permission was not only taken; she was laughed at and rejoiced over triumphantly, to Mr. Carlisle's content. Eleanor bore it as well as she could; wishing that she had not tried to assert herself in such vain fashion, and feeling her discomfiture complete.

It was more than time to return to the company. Eleanor knew what a mark she was for people's eyes, and would gladly have screened herself behind somebody in a corner; but Mr. Carlisle kept full possession of her. He walked her into the room, and gently retained her hand in its place while he went from one to another, obliging her to stand and talk or to be talked to with him through the whole company. Eleanor winced; nevertheless bore herself well and a little proudly until the evening was over.

The weather had changed, and the ride home was begun under a cloudy sky. It grew very dark as they

went on ; impossible in many places to see the path. Mr. Carlisle was riding with her and the roads were well known to him and to the horses, and Eleanor did not mind it. She went on gayly with him, rather delighting in the novelty and adventure ; till she heard a muttering of thunder. It was the only thing Eleanor's nerves dreaded. Her spirits were checked ; she became silent and quiet, and hardly heard enough to respond to her companion's talk. She was looking incessantly for that which came at last as they were nearing the old ruins in the valley ; a flash of lightning. It lit up the beautiful tower with its clinging ivy, revealed for an instant some bits of wall and the thick clustering trees ; then left a blank darkness. The same illumination had entered the hidden places of memory, and startled into vivid life the scenes and the thoughts of a few months ago. All Eleanor's latent uneasiness was aroused. Her attention was absorbed now, from this point until they got home, in watching for flashes of lightning. They came frequently, but the storm was after all a slight one. The lightning lit up the way beautifully for the other members of the party. To Eleanor it revealed something more.

Mr. Carlisle's leave-taking at the door bespoke him well satisfied with the results of the evening. Eleanor shunned the questions and remarks of her family and went to her own room. There she sat down, in her riding habit and with her head in her hands. What use was it for her to be baroness of Rythdale, to be mistress of the Priory, to be Mr. Carlisle's petted and favoured wife, while there was no shield between her head and the stroke that any day and any moment might bring ? And what after all availed an earthly coronet, ever so bright, which had nothing to replace it when its fading time should come ? Eleanor wanted something more.

CHAPTER VII.

*"It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute."*

It was impossible for Eleanor to shake off the feeling. It rose fresh with her the next day, and neither her own nor Mr. Carlisle's efforts could dispose of it. To do Eleanor justice, she did not herself wish to lose it, unless by the supply of her want; while she took special care to hide her trouble from Mr. Carlisle. They took great gallops on the moor, and long rides all about the country; the rides were delightful; the talks were gay; but in them all, or at the end of them certainly, Eleanor's secret cry was for some shelter for her unprotected head. The thought would come up in every possible connexion, till it haunted her. Not her approaching marriage, nor the preparations which were even beginning for it, nor her involuntary subjection to all Mr. Carlisle's pleasure, so much dwelt with Eleanor now as the question,—how she should meet the storm which must break upon her some day; or rather the sense that she could not meet it. The fairest and sweetest scene, or condition of things, seemed but to bring up this thought more vividly by very force of contrast.

Eleanor hid the whole within her own heart, and the fire burned there all the more. Not a sign of it must Mr. Carlisle see; and as for Dr. Cairnes, Eleanor could never get a chance for a safe talk with him. Somebody was always near, or might be near. The very effort to hide her thoughts grew sometimes irksome; and the

whirl of engagements and occupations in which she lived gave her a stifled feeling. She could not even indulge herself in solitary consideration of that which there was nobody to help her consider.

She hailed one day the announcement that Mr. Carlisle must let the next day go by without riding or seeing her. He would be kept away at a town some miles off, on county business. Mr. Carlisle had a good deal to do with county politics and country business generally; made himself both important and popular, and lost no thread of influence he had once gathered into his hand. So Brompton would have him all the next day, and Eleanor would have her time to herself.

That she might secure full possession of it, she ordered her pony and went out alone after luncheon. She could not get free earlier. Now she took no servant to follow her, and started off alone to the moors. It was a delicious autumn day, mild and still and mellow. Eleanor got out of sight or hearing of human habitations; then let her pony please himself in his paces while she dropped the reins and thought. It was hardly in Eleanor's nature to have bitter thoughts; they came as near it on this occasion as they were apt to do; they were very dissatisfied thoughts. She was on the whole dissatisfied with everybody; herself most of all, it is true; but her mother and Mr. Carlisle had a share. She did not want to be married at Christmas; she did not even care about going to Switzerland, unless by her own good leave asked and obtained; she was not willing to be managed as a child; yet Eleanor was conscious that she was no better in Mr. Carlisle's hands. "I wonder what sort of a master he will make," she thought, "when he has me entirely in his power? I have no sort of liberty now." It humbled her; it was her own fault; yet Eleanor liked Mr. Carlisle, and thought that she loved him. She was young yet and very inexperienced. She also liked all

the splendour of the position he gave her. Yet above the gratification of this, through the dazzle of wealth and pleasure and power, Eleanor discerned now a want these could not fill. What should she do when they failed? there was no provision in them for the want of them. Eleanor forgot her loss of independence, and pondered these thoughts till they grew bitter with pain. By turns she wished she had never seen Mr. Rhys, who she remembered first started them; or wished she could see him again.

In the stillness and freedom and peace of the wide moor, Eleanor had fearlessly given herself up to her musings, without thinking or caring which way she went. The pony, finding the choice left to him, had naturally enough turned off into a track leading over some wild hills where he had been bred; the locality had pleasant associations for him. But it had none of any kind for Eleanor; and when she roused herself to think of it, she found she was in a distant part of the moor and drawing near to the hills aforesaid; a bleak and dreary looking region, and very far from home. Neither was she very sure by which way she might soonest regain a neighbourhood that she knew. To follow the path she was on and turn off into the first track that branched in the right direction, seemed the best to do; and she roused up her pony to an energetic little gallop. It seemed little after the long bounds Black Maggie would take through the air; but it was brisk work for the pony. Eleanor kept him at his speed. It was luxurious, to be alone; ride as she liked, slow or fast, and think as she liked, even forbidden thoughts. Her own mistress once more. Eleanor exulted, all the more because she was a rebel. The wild moor was delicious; the freedom was delicious; only she was far from home and the afternoon was on the wane. She kept the pony to his speed.

By the base of the hills near to which the road led her, stood a miserable little house. It needed but a look at the place, to decide that the people who lived in it must be also miserable, and probably in more ways than one. Eleanor who had intended asking there for some news of her whereabouts and the roads, changed her mind as she drew near and resolved to pass the house at a gallop. So much for wise resolves. The miserable children who dwelt in the house had been that day making a bonfire for their amusement right on her track. The hot ashes were still there; the pony set his feet in them, reared high, and threw his rider, who had never known the pony do such a thing before and had no reason to expect it of him. Eleanor was thrown clean off on the ground, and fell stunned.

She picked herself up after a few minutes, to find no bones broken, the miserable hut close by, and two children and an old crone looking at her. The pony had concluded it a dangerous neighbourhood and departed, shewing a clean pair of heels. Eleanor gathered her dress in her hand and looked at the people who were staring at her. Such faces!

"What place is this?" she asked, forcing herself to be bold. The answer was utterly unintelligible. All Eleanor could make out was the hoarsely or thickly put question, "Be you hurted?"

"No, thank you—not at all, I believe," she said breathlessly, for she had not got over the shock of her fall. "How far am I from the village of Wiglands?"

Again the words that were spoken in reply gave no meaning to her ear.

"Boys, will one of you shew me the nearest way there? I will give you something as soon as I get home."

The children stared, at her and at each other; but Eleanor was more comprehensible to them than they to her. The old woman said some hoarse words to the

children ; and then one of them stepped forth and said strangely, " I 'ze go wiz ye."

" I'll reward him for it," said Eleanor, nodding to the old grandmother ; and set off, very glad to be walking away. She did not breathe freely till a good many yards of distance were between her and the hut, where the crone and the other child still remained watching her. There might be others of the family coming home ; and Eleanor walked at a brave pace until she had well left the little hut behind, out of all fear of pursuit. Then she began to feel that she was somewhat shattered by her fall, and getting tired, and she went more gently. But it was a long, long way ; the reach of moor seemed endless ; for it was a very different thing to go over it on Black Maggie's feet from going over it on her own. Eleanor was exceedingly weary, and still the brown common stretched away on all sides of her ; and the distant tuft of vegetation which announced the village of Wiglands, stood afar off, and seemed to be scarcely nearer after miles of walking. Before they reached it Eleanor's feet were dragging after one another in weariest style. She could not possibly go on to the Lodge without stopping to rest. How should she reward and send back her guide ? As she was thinking of this, Eleanor saw the smoke curling up from a stray cottage hid among the trees ; it was Mrs. Williams's cottage. Her heart sprang with a sudden temptation—doubted, balanced, and resolved. She had excuse enough ; she would do a rebellious thing. She would go there and rest. It might give her a chance to see Mr. Rhys and hear him talk ; it might not. If the chance came, why she would be very glad of it. Eleanor had no money about her ; she hastily detached a gold pencil case from her watch chain and put it into the ragged creature's hand who had guided her ; saw him turn his back, then went with a sort of

stealthy joy to the front of Mrs. Williams's cottage, pushed the door open softly and went in.

Nobody was there; not a cat; it was all still. An inner door stood ajar; within there was a sound of voices, low and pleasant. Eleanor supposed Mrs. Williams would make her appearance in a minute, and sank down on the first chair that offered; sank even her head in her hands, for very weariness and the very sense of rest and security gained. The chair was one standing by the fire and near the open inner door; the voices came quite plainly through; and the next minute let Eleanor know that one of them was the voice of her little sister Julia; she heard one of Julia's joyous utterances. The other voice belonged to Mr. Rhys. No sound of Mrs. Williams. Eleanor sat still, her head bowed in her hands, and listened.

It seemed that Julia was looking at something—or some collection of things. Eleanor could hear the slight rustling of paper handled—then a pause and talk. Julia had a great deal to say. Eleanor presently made out that they were looking at a collection of plants. She felt so tired that she had no inclination to move a single muscle. Mind and body sat still to listen.

"And what is that?" she heard Julia say.

"Mountain fern."

"Isn't it beautiful! O that's as pretty as a feather."

"If you saw them growing, dozens of them springing from the same root, you would think them beautiful. Then those brown edgings are black as jet and glossy."

"Are those the *theceæ*, Mr. Rhys?"

"Yes. The *Lastræas*, and all their family, have the fruit in those little round spots, each with its own covering; that is their mark."

"It is so funny that plants should have families," said Julia. "Now is this one of the family, Mr. Rhys?"

"Certainly; that is a *Cystopteris*."

"It's a dear little thing! Where did you get it, Mr. Rhys?"

"I do not remember. They grow pretty nearly all over; you find them on rocks, and walls."

"I don't find them," said Julia. "I wish I could. Now what is that?"

"Another of the family, but not a *Cystopteris*. That is the Holly fern. Do you see how stiff and prickly it is? That was a troublesome one to manage. I gathered it on a high mountain in Wales, I think."

"Are high mountains good places?"

"For the mountain ferns. That is another *Lastræa* you have now; that is very elegant. That grows on mountains too, but also on many other places; shoots up in elegant tufts almost a yard high. I have seen it very beautiful. When the fruit is ripe, the indusium is something of a lilac colour, spotting the frond in double rows—as you see it there. I have seen these *Lastræas* and others, growing in great profusion on a wild place in Devonshire, in the neighbourhood of the rushing torrent of a river. The spray flew up on the rocks and stones along its banks, keeping them moist, and sometimes overflowed them; and there in the vegetable matter that had by little and little collected, there was such a show of ferns as I have not often seen. Another *Lastræa* grew, I should think, five feet high; and this one, and the Lady fern. Turn the next sheet—there it is. That is the Lady fern."

"How perfectly beautiful!" Julia exclaimed. "Is that a *Lastræa* too?"

Mr. Rhys laughed a little as he answered "No." Until then his voice had kept the quiet even tone of feeble strength.

"Why is it called Lady fern?"

"I do not know. Perhaps because it is so delicate in

its structure—perhaps because it is so tender. It does not bear being broken from its root.”

“But I think Eleanor is as strong as anybody,” said Julia.

“Don’t you remember how ill she was, only from having wetted her feet, last summer?” said Mr. Rhys with perfect gravity.

“Well, what is that?” said Julia, not liking the inference they were coming to.

“That is a little fern that loves the wet. It grows by waterfalls—those are its homes. It grows close to the fall, where it will be constantly watered by the spray from it; sometimes this little half-brother it has, the Oak fern, is found there along with it. They are elegant species.”

“It must be nice to go to the waterfalls and climb up to get them,” said Julia. “What do you call these little wet beauties, Mr. Rhys?”

“Polypodies.”

“Polypodies! Now, Mr. Rhys,—O what is this? This is prettiest of all.”

“Yes, one of the very prettiest. I found that in a cave, a wet cave, by the sea. That is the sort of home it likes.”

“In Wales?”

“In Wales I have found it, and elsewhere; in the south of England; but always by the sea; in places where I have seen a great many other beautiful things.”

“By the sea, Mr. Rhys? Why I have been there, and I did not see anything but the waves and the sand and the rocks.”

“You did not know where to look.”

“Where did you look?”

“Under the rocks;—and in them.”

“In the rocks, sir?”

“In their clefts and hollows and caves. In caves.

which I could only reach in a boat, or by going in at low tide; then I saw things more beautiful than a fairy palace, Julia."

"What sort of things?"

"Animals—and plants."

"Beautiful animals?"

"Very beautiful."

"Well I wish you would take me with you, Mr. Rhys. I would not mind wetting my feet. I will be a Hard fern—not a Lady fern. Eleanor shall be the lady. O Mr. Rhys, won't you hate to leave England?"

"There are plenty of beautiful things where I am going, Julia—if I get well."

"But the people are so bad!"

"That is why I want to go to them."

"But what can you do to them?"

"I can tell them of the Lord Jesus, Julia. They have never heard of him; that is why they are so evil."

"Maybe they won't believe you, Mr. Rhys."

"Maybe they will. But the Lord has commanded me to go, all the same."

"How, Mr. Rhys?"

He answered in the beautiful words of Paul—"How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" There was a sorrowful depth in his tones, speaking to himself rather than to his little listener.

"Mr. Rhys, they are such dreadfully bad people, they might kill you, and eat you."

"Yes."

"Are you not afraid?"

"No."

There is strangely much sometimes expressed, one can hardly say how, in the tone of a single word. So it was with this word, even to the ears of Eleanor in the next room. It was round and sweet, untrembling, with

something like a vibration of joy in its low utterance. It was but a word, said in answer to a child's idle question; it pierced like a barbed arrow through all the involutions of another heart, down into the core. It was an accent of strength and quiet and fearless security, though spoken by lips that were very uncertain of their tenure of life. It gave the chord that Eleanor wanted sounded in her own soul; where now there was no harmony at all, but sometimes a jarring clang, and sometimes an echo of fear.

"But Mr. Rhys, aren't they very *dreadful*, over there where you want to go?" Julia said.

"Very dreadful; more than you can possibly imagine, or than I can, perhaps."

"Well I hope you won't go. Mr. Rhys, I think Mrs. Williams stays a great while—it is time the kettle was on for your tea."

Eleanor had hardly time to be astonished at this most novel display of careful housewifery on her little sister's part, whom indeed she would have supposed to be ignorant that such a thing as a kettle existed; when Julia came bounding into the outer room to look after the article, or after the old dame who should take charge of it. She stopped short, and Eleanor raised her head. Julia's exclamation was hearty.

"Hush!" whispered Eleanor.

"What should I hush for? there's nobody here but Mr. Rhys in the other room; and he was saying the other day that he wanted to see you."

Back she bounded. "Mr. Rhys, here's Eleanor in the other room, and no Mrs. Williams."

Eleanor heard the quiet answer—"Tell your sister, that as I cannot walk out to see her, perhaps she will do me the favour to come in here."

There was nothing better, in the circumstances; indeed Eleanor felt she must go in to explain herself; she

only waited for Julia's brisk summons—"Eleanor, Mr. Rhys wants to see you!"—and gathering up her habit she walked into the other room as steadily as if she had all the right in the world to be there; bearing herself a little proudly, for a sudden thought of Mr. Carlisle came over her. Mr. Rhys was lying on the couch, as she had seen him before; but she was startled at the paleness of his face, made more startling by the very dark eyebrows and bushy hair. He raised himself on his elbow as she came in, and Eleanor could not refuse to give him her hand.

"I ought to apologize for not rising to receive you," he said,—“but you see I cannot help it.”

"I am very sorry, Mr. Rhys. Are you less strong than you were a few weeks ago?"

"I seem to have no strength at all now," he answered with a half laugh. "Will you not sit down? Julia, suppose you coax the fire to burn a little brighter, for your sister's welcome?"

"She can do it herself," said Julia. "I am going to see to the fire in the other room."

"No, that would be inhospitable," Mr. Rhys said with a smile; "and I do not believe your sister knows how, Julia. She has not learned as many things as you have."

Julia gave her friend a very loving look and went at the fire without more words. Eleanor sat under a strange spell. She hardly knew her sister in that look; and there was about the pale pure face that lay on the couch, with its shining eyes, an atmosphere of influence that subdued and enthralled her. It was with an effort that she roused herself to give the intended explanation of her being in that place. Mr. Rhys heard her throughout.

"I am very glad you were thrown," he said; "since it has procured me the pleasure of seeing you."

"Mr. Carlisle will never let you ride alone again—that

is one thing!" said Julia. And having finished the fire and her exclamatory comments together, she ran off into the other room. Her last words had called up a deep flush on Eleanor's face. Mr. Rhys waited till it had passed quite away, then he asked very calmly, and putting the question also with his bright eyes,

"How have you been, since I saw you last?"

The eyes were bright, not with the specular brightness of many eyes, but with a sort of fulness of light and keenness of intelligent vision. Eleanor knew perfectly well to what they referred. She shrank within herself, cowered, and hesitated. Then made a brave effort and threw back the question.

"How have *you* been, Mr. Rhys?"

"I have been well," he said. "You know it is the privilege of the children of God, to glory in tribulations. That is what I am doing."

"Have you been so very ill?" asked Eleanor.

"My illness gives me no pain," he answered; "it only incapacitates me for doing anything. And at first that was more grievous to me than you can understand. With so much to do, and with my heart in the work, it seemed as if my Master had laid me aside and said, 'You shall do no more; you shall lie there and not speak my name to men any longer.' It gave me great pain at first—I was tempted to rebel; but now I know that patience worketh experience. I thank him for the lessons he has taught me. I am willing to go out and be useful, or to lie here and be comparatively useless,—just as my Lord will!"

The slow deliberate utterance, which testified at once of physical weakness and mental power; the absolute repose of the bright face, touched Eleanor profoundly. She sat spell-bound, forgetting her overthrow and her fatigue and everything else; only conscious of her struggling thoughts and cares of the weeks past and of the

presence and influence of the one person she knew who had the key to them.

"Having so few opportunities," he went on, "you will not be surprised that I hail every one that offers, of speaking in my Master's name. I know that he has summoned you to his service, Miss Powle—is he your Master yet?"

Eleanor pushed her chair round, grating it on the floor, so as to turn her face a little away, and answered, "No."

"You have heard his call to you?"

Eleanor felt her whole heart convulsed in the struggle to answer or not answer this question. With great difficulty she kept herself outwardly perfectly quiet; and at last said hoarsely, looking away from Mr. Rhys into the fire,

"How do you know anything about it?"

"Have you yielded obedience to his commands?" he said, disregarding her words.

"I do not know what they are—" Eleanor answered.

"Have you sought to find them out?"

She hesitated, and said "no." Her face was completely turned away from him now; but the tender intonation of the next words thrilled through every nerve of her heart and brain.

"Then your head is uncovered yet by that helmet of security which you were anxious about a little time ago?"

It was the speech of somebody who saw right into her heart and knew all that was going on there; what was the use of holding out and trying to maintain appearances? Eleanor's head sank; her heart gave way, she burst into tears. Now was her chance, she thought; the ice was broken; she would ask of Mr. Rhys all she wanted to know, for he could tell her. Before another word was spoken, in rushed Julia.

"I've got *that* going," she said ; "you shall have some tea directly, Mr. Rhys. I hope Mrs. Williams will stay away till I get through. Now it will take a little while—come here, Eleanor, and look at these beautiful ferns."

Eleanor was sitting upright again ; she had driven the tears back. She hoped for another chance of speaking, when Julia should go to get her tea ready. In the mean while she moved her seat, as her sister desired her, to look over the ferns. This brought her into the neighbourhood of the couch, where Julia sat on a low bench, turning the great sheets of paper on the floor before her. It brought Eleanor's face into full view, too, she knew ; but now she did not care for that. Julia went on rapturously with the ferns, asking information as before ; and in Mr. Rhys's answers there was a grave tone of preoccupation which thrilled on Eleanor's ear and kept her own mind to the point where it had been.

"Are there ferns out there where you are going if you get well, Mr. Rhys? new ones?"

"I have no doubt of it."

"Then you will gather them and dry them, won't you?"

"I think it is very possible I may."

"I wish you wouldn't go! O Mr. Rhys, tell Eleanor about that place ; she don't know about it. Tell her what you told me."

He did ; perhaps to fill up the time and take Eleanor's attention from herself for the moment. He gave a short account of the people in question ; a people of fine physical and even fine mental development, for savages ; inhabiting a country of great beauty and rich natural resources ; but at the same time sunk in the most abject depths of moral debasement. A country where the "works of the devil" had reached their utmost vigour ; where men lived but for vile ends, and took the lives of their fellow-men and each other with the utmost ruth-

lessness and carelessness and horrible cruelty ; and more than that, where they dishonoured human life by abusing, and even eating, the forms in which human life had residence. It was a terrible picture Mr. Rhys drew, in a few words ; so terrible, that it did take Eleanor's attention from all else for the time.

"Is other life safe there?" she asked. "Do the white people who go there feel themselves secure?"

"I presume they do not."

"Then why go to such a horrible place?"

"Why not?" he asked. "The darker they are, the more they want light."

"But it is to jeopardize the very life you wish to use for them."

Mr. Rhys was silent for a moment, and when he spoke it was only to make a remark about the fern which lay displayed on the floor before Julia.

"That Hart's-tongue," said he, "I gathered from a cavern on the sea-coast—where it grew hanging down from the roof,—quantities of it."

"In a dark cavern, Mr. Rhys?" said Julia.

"Not in a dark part of the cavern. No, it grew only where it could have the light.—Miss Powle, I am of David's mind—" In God I have put my trust ; I will not fear what flesh can do to me."

He looked up at Eleanor as he spoke. The slight smile, the look, in Eleanor's mood of mind, were like a coal of fire dropped into her heart. It burned. She said nothing ; sat still and looked at the fern on the floor.

"But will you not feel *afraid*, Mr. Rhys?" said Julia.

"Why no, Julia. I shall have nothing to be afraid of. You forget who will be with me."

Julia with that jumped up and ran off to see about her fire and kettle in the other room. Eleanor and Mr. Rhys were left alone. The latter did not speak. Eleanor longed to hear more, and made a great effort.

“I do not understand you,” she said hoarsely, for in the stir of her feelings she could not command a clear voice. “You say, He will be with you. What do you mean? We cannot see him now. How will he be with you?”

She had raised her eyes, and she saw a strange softness and light pass over the face she was looking at. Indefinable, unaccountable, she yet saw it; a shining from the spiritual glory within, which Eleanor recognized, though she had never seen it before. Fire and water were in those bright eyes at once; and Eleanor guessed the latter evidence of emotion was for his ignorant questioner. She had no heart left. By such a flash of revelation the light from one spirit shewed the other its darkness; dimly known to her before; but now, once and forever, she knew where *she* stood and where *he* stood, and what the want of her life must be, till she should stand there too. Her face shewed but a little of the work going on with heavings and strugglings in her mind; yet doubtless it was as readable to her companion as his had been to her. She could only hear at the time—afterwards she pondered—the words of his reply.

“I cannot shew him to you;—but he will shew himself to you, if you seek him.”

There was no chance for more words; Julia came in again, and was thereafter bustling in and out, getting her cup of tea ready. Eleanor could not meet her little sister’s looks and probable words; she turned hastily from the ferns and the couch and put herself at the window with her back to everybody. There was a wild cry in her heart—“What shall I do! what shall I do!” One thing she must have, or be miserable; how was she to make it her own. As soon as she turned her face from that cottage room and what was in it, she must meet the full blast of opposing currents; unfavourable, adverse, overwhelming. Her light was not strong enough to

stand that blast, Eleanor knew ; it would be blown out directly ;—and she left in darkness. In a desperate sense of this, a desperate resolve to overcome it somehow, a despairing powerlessness to contend, she sat at the window seeing nothing. She was brought to herself at last by Julia's, "Eleanor—Mr. Rhys wants you to take a cup of tea." Eleanor turned round mechanically, took the cup, and changed her place for one near the fire.

She never forgot that scene. Julia's part in it gave it a most strange air to Eleanor ; so did her own. Julia was moving about, quite at home, preparing cups of tea for everybody, herself included ; and waiting upon Mr. Rhys with a steady care and affectionateness which evidently met with an affectionate return. The cottage room with its plain furniture—the little common blue cups in which the tea was served—the fire in the chimney on the coarse iron fire-dogs—the reclining figure on the couch, and her own riding-habit in the middle of the room ; were all stereotyped on Eleanor's memory for ever. The tea refreshed her very much.

"How are you going to get home, Miss Powle?" asked her host. "Have you sent for a carriage?"

"No—I saw nobody to send—I can walk it quite well now," said Eleanor. And feeling that the time was come, she set down her tea-cup and came to bid her host good-bye ; though she shrank from doing it. She gave him her hand again, but she had no words to speak.

"Good-bye," said he. "I am sorry I am not well enough to come and see you ; I would take that liberty."

"And so I shall never see him again," thought Eleanor as she went out of the cottage ; "and nobody will ever speak any more words to me of what I want to hear ; and what will become of me ! What chance shall I have very soon—what chance have I now—to attend to these things ? to get right ? and what chance would all these

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things have with Mr. Carlisle? I could manage my mother. What will become of me!"

Eleanor walked and thought, both hard, till she got past the village; finding herself alone, thought got the better of haste, and she threw herself down under a tree to collect some order and steadiness in her mind if possible before other interests and distractions broke in. She sat with her face buried in her hands a good while. And one conclusion Eleanor's thoughts came to; that there was a thing more needful than other things; and that she would hold that one thing first in her mind, and keep it first in her endeavours, and make all her arrangements accordingly. Eleanor was young and untried, but her mind had a tolerable back-bone of stiffness when once aroused to take action; her conclusion meant something. She rose up, then; looked to see how far down the sun was; and turning to pursue her walk vigorously—found Mr. Carlisle at her side. He was as much surprised as she.

"Why Eleanor! what are you doing here?"

"Trying to get home. I have been thrown from my pony."

"Thrown! where?"

"Away on the moor—I don't know where. I never was there before. I am not hurt."

"Then how come you here?"

"Walked here, sir."

"And where are your servants?"

"You forget. I am only Eleanor Powle—I do not go with a train after me."

But she was obliged to give an account of the whole affair.

"You must not go alone in that way again," said he decidedly. "Sit down again."

"Look where the sun is. I am going home," said Eleanor.

"Sit down. I am going to send for a carriage."

Eleanor protested, in vain. Mr. Carlisle sent his groom on to the Lodge with the message, and the heels of the horses were presently clattering in the distance. Eleanor stood still.

"I do not want rest," she insisted. "I am ready to walk home, and able. I have been resting."

"How long?"

"A long while. I went into Mrs. Williams's cottage and rested there. I would rather go on."

He put her hand upon his arm and turned towards the Lodge, but permitted her after all to move only at the gentlest of rates.

"You will not go out in this way again?" he said; and the words were more an expression of his own will than an enquiry as to hers.

"There is no reason why I should not," Eleanor answered.

"I do not like that you should be walking over moors and taking shelter in cottages, without protection."

"I can protect myself. I know what is due to me."

"You must remember what is due to *me*," he said laughing, and stopping her lips when she would have replied. Eleanor walked along, silenced, and for the moment subdued. The wish was in her heart, to have let Mr. Carlisle know in some degree what bent her spirit was taking; to have given him some hint of what he must expect in her when she became his wife; she could not find how to do it. She could not see the way to begin. So far was Mr. Carlisle from the whole world of religious interests and concerns, that to introduce it to him seemed like bringing opposite poles together. She walked by his side very silent and doubtful. He thought she was tired; put her into the carriage with great tenderness when it came; and at parting from her in the evening desired her to go early to rest.

Eleanor was very little likely to do it. The bodily adventures of the day had left little trace, or little that was regarded; the mental journey had been much more lasting in its effects. That night there was a young moon, and Eleanor sat at her window, looking out into the shadowy indistinctness of the outer world, while she tried to resolve the confusion of her mind into something like visible order and definiteness. Two points were clear, and seemed to loom up larger and clearer the longer she thought about them; her supreme need of that which she had not, the faith and deliverance of religion; and the adverse influence and opposition of Mr. Carlisle in all the efforts she might make to secure or maintain it. And under all this lurked a thought that was like a serpent for its unrecognized coming and going and for the sting it left,—a wish that she could put off her marriage. No new thing in one way; Eleanor had never been willing it should be fixed for so early a day; nevertheless she had accepted and submitted to it, and become accustomed to the thought of it. Now repugnance started up anew and with fresh energy. She could hardly understand herself; her thoughts were a great turmoil; they went over and over some of the experiences of the day, with an aimless dwelling upon them; yet Eleanor was in general no dreamer. The words of Mr. Rhys, that had pierced her with a sense of duty and need—the looks, that even in the remembrance wrung her heart with their silent lesson-bearing—the sympathy testified for herself, which intensified all her own emotions,—and in contrast, the very tender and affectionate but supreme manner of Mr. Carlisle, in whose power she felt she was,—the alternation of these images and the thoughts they gave rise to, kept Eleanor at her window, until the young moon went down behind the western horizon and the night was dark with only stars. So dark she felt, and miserable; and over and over and over again her cry of that

afternoon was re-echoed,—“What shall I do! what will become of me!”

Upon one thing she fixed. That Mr. Carlisle should know that he was not going to find a gay wife in her, but one whose mind was set upon somewhat else and upon another way of life. This would be very distasteful to him; and he should know it. How she would manage to let him know, Eleanor left to circumstances; but she went to bed with that point determined.

CHAPTER VIII.

"It hath been the longest night
That e'er I watched, and the most heaviest."

Good resolutions are sometimes excellent things, but they are susceptible of overturns. Eleanor's met with one.

She was sitting with Mr. Carlisle the very next day, in a disturbed mood of mind; for he and her mother had been laying plans and making dispositions with reference to her approaching marriage; plans and dispositions in which her voice was not asked, and in which matters were carried rapidly forward towards their consummation. Eleanor felt that bands and chains were getting multiplied round her, fastening her more and more in the possession of her captor, while her own mind was preparing what would be considered resistance to the authority thus secured. The sooner she spoke the better; but how to begin? She bent over her embroidery frame with cheeks that gradually grew burning hot. The soft wind that blew in from the open window at her side would not cool them. Mr. Carlisle came and sat down beside her.

"What does all this mean?" said he laughingly, drawing his finger softly over Eleanor's rich cheek.

"It's hot!" said Eleanor.

"Is it? I have the advantage of you. It is the perfection of a day to me."

"Eleanor," cried Julia bounding in through the window, "Mr. Rhys is better to-day. He says so."

"Is he?" said Eleanor.

"Yes; you know how weak he was yesterday; he is not quite so weak to-day."

"Who is Mr. Rhys?" said Mr. Carlisle.

"O he is nice! Eleanor says nice rhymes to Rhys. Wasn't my tea nice, Eleanor? We had Miss Broadus to tea this afternoon. We had you yesterday and Miss Broadus to-day. I wonder who will come next."

"Is this a sick friend you have been visiting?" said Mr. Carlisle, as Julia ran off, having accomplished the discomfiture of her sister.

"No, not at all—only I stopped at Mrs. Williams' cottage to rest yesterday; and he lives there."

"You saw him?"

"Yes; Julia found me, and I could not help seeing him."

"But you took *tea* there, Eleanor? With whom?"

"I took tea with Julia and her sick friend. Why not? She was making a cup of tea for him and gave me one. I was very glad of it. There was no one else in the house."

"How is your sister allowed to do such things?"

"For a sick friend, Mr. Carlisle? I think it is well anybody's part to do such things."

"I think I will forbid embroidery frames at the Priory, if they are to keep me from seeing your eyes," said he, with one arm drawing her back from the frame and with the other hand taking her fingers from it, and looking into her face, but kissing her. "Now tell me, who is this gentleman?"

Eleanor was irritated; yet the assumption of authority, calm and proud as it was, had a mixture of tenderness which partly soothed her. The demand however was imperious. Eleanor answered.

"He was Alfred's tutor—you have seen him—h: as

been very ill all summer. He is a sick man, staying in the village."

"And what have you to do with such a person?"

"Nothing in the world! I stopped there to rest myself, because I was too tired to walk home."

He smiled at her kindling indignation, and gave her a kiss by way of forgiveness for it; then went on gravely.

"You have been to that cottage before, Eleanor?"

"Yes."

"How was that?"

"I went with Julia when she was carrying some refreshments to her sick friend. I will do that for anybody, Mr. Carlisle."

"Say that over again," he said calmly, but with a manner that shewed he would have it. And Eleanor could not resist.

"I would do that for anybody, Macintosh," she said gently, laying her hand upon his arm.

"No, darling. You shall send nurses and supplies to all the folk in the kingdom—if you will—but you shall pay such honour as this to nobody but me."

"Mr. Carlisle," said Eleanor rousing again, "if I am not worthy your trust, I am not fit to do either you or anybody else honour."

She had straightened herself up to face him as she said this, but it was mortifying to feel how little she could rouse him. He only drew her back into his arms, folding her close and kissing her again and again.

"You are naughty," he said, "but you are good. You are as sweet as a rose, Eleanor. My wife will obey me, in a few things, and she shall command me in all others. Darling, I wish you not to be seen in the village again alone. Let some one attend you, if I am not at hand."

He suffered her to return to her embroidery; but though Eleanor's heart beat and her cheek was flushed

with contending feelings, she could not find a word to say. Her heart rebelled against the authority held over her; nevertheless it subdued her; she dared not bring her rebellion into open light. She shrank from that; and hid now in her own thoughts all the new revelations she had meant to draw forth for Mr. Carlisle's entertainment. Now was no time. In fact Eleanor's consciousness made her afraid that if she mentioned her religious purposes and uneasiness, this man's acuteness would catch at the connecting link between the new dereliction of duty and the former which had been just rebuked. That would lay her open to imputations and suspicions too dishonouring to be risked, and impossible to disprove, however false. She must hold her tongue for the present; and Eleanor worked on at her embroidery, her fingers pulling at it energetically, while feeling herself much more completely in another's power than it suited her nature to be. Somehow at this time the vision of Rythdale Priory was not the indemnification it had seemed to her before. Eleanor liked Mr. Carlisle, but she did not like to be governed by him; although with an odd inconsistency, it was that very power of government which formed part of his attraction. Certainly women are strange creatures. Meanwhile she tugged on at her work with a hot cheek and a divided mind, and a wisely silent tongue; and Mr. Carlisle sat by and made himself very busy with her, finding out ways of being both pleasant and useful. Finally he put a stop to the embroidery and engaged Eleanor in a game of chess with him; began to teach her how to play it, and succeeded in getting her thoroughly interested and diverted from her troublesome thoughts. They returned as soon as he left her.

"I can never speak to him about my religious feelings," mused Eleanor as she walked slowly to her own room,—"never! I almost think, if I did, he would find

means to cheat me out of them, in spite of all my determinations—until it would be too late. What is to become of me? What a double part I shall play now—my heart all one way, my outer life all another. It must be so. I can shew these thoughts to no one. Will they live, shut up in the dark so?”

Mr. Rhys's words about “seeking” recurred to her. Eleanor did not know how, and felt strange. “I could follow his prayers, if I heard them,” she said to herself;—“I do not know how to set about it. I suppose reading the Bible is good—that and good books.”

And that Eleanor tried. Good books however were by and by given up; none that she had in the least suited her wants; only the Bible proved both a light and a power to her. It had a great fascination for Eleanor, and it sometimes made her hopeful; at any rate she persevered in reading it, through gloom and cheer; and her mind when she was alone knew much more of the former condition than of the latter. When not alone, she was in a whirl of other occupations and interests. The preparations for her marriage went on diligently; Eleanor saw it and knew it, and would not help though she could not hinder. But she was very far from happy. The style and title of Lady Rythdale had faded in her imagination; other honour and glory, though dimly seen, seemed more desirable to Eleanor now, and seemed endangered by this. She was very uneasy. She struggled between the remaining sense of pride, which sometimes arose to life, and this thought of something better; at other times she felt as if her marriage with Mr. Carlisle would doom her forever to go without any treasure but what an earthly coronet well lined with ermine might symbolize and ensure. Meanwhile weeks flew by; while Eleanor studied the Bible and sought for light in her solitary hours at night, and joined in all Mr. Carlisle's plans of gayety by day. September and

October were both gone. November's short days begun. And when the days should be at the shortest—"Then," thought Eleanor, "my fate will be settled. Mr. Carlisle will have me; and I can never disobey him. I cannot now."

November reached the middle, and there wanted but little more than a month to the wedding-day. Eleanor sat one morning in her garden parlour, which a mild day made pleasant; working by the glass door. The old thought, "What will become of me!" was in her heart. A shadow darkened the door. Eleanor looked up, fearing to see Mr. Carlisle; it was her little sister Julia.

Julia opened the door and came in. "It is nice in the garden, Eleanor," she said. "The chrysanthemums are so beautiful as I never saw them—white and yellow and orange and rose-colour, and a hundred colours. They are beautiful, Eleanor."

"Yes."

"May I have a great bunch of them to take to Mr. Rhys?"

"Have what you like. I thought you used to take them without asking."

Julia looked serious.

"I wish I could go down to the village to-night, I know"—she said.

"*To-night!* What do you wish that for?"

"Because, Mr. Rhys is going to preach; and I do want to go so much; but I can't."

"Going to preach!—why is he so well as that?"

"He isn't well at all," said Julia,—“not what you would call well. But he says he is well. He is white and weak enough yet; and I don't think that is being well. He can't go to Lily Dale nor to Rythdale; so some of the people are coming to Wiglands."

"Where is he going to preach?"

"Where do you think? In Mr. Brooks's barn. They

won't let him preach at the inn, and he can't have the church; and I *do* want to see how he can preach in the barn!"

Mr. Brooks was a well-to-do farmer, a tenant of the Rythdale estate, living near the road to the old priory and half a mile from the village of Wiglands. A consuming desire seized Eleanor to do as her little sister had said—hear Mr. Rhys preach. The desire was so violent that it half frightened her with the possibility of its fulfilment.

She told Julia that it was an absurd wish, and impracticable, and dismissed her; and then her whole mind focussed itself on Mr. Brooks's barn. Eleanor saw nothing else through the morning, whatever she was doing. It was impossible she should get there, perfectly impossible! yet it was a first, last, and only chance, perhaps in her life, of hearing the words of truth so spoken as she knew they would be in that place that night. Besides, she had a craving curiosity to know *how* they would be spoken. One month more, Eleanor once securely lodged in Rythdale Priory, and her chance of hearing any words whatever spoken in a barn, was over for ever; unless indeed she condescended to become an inspector of agricultural proceedings. Yet she said to herself over and over that she had no chance now; that her being present was a matter of wild impossibility; she said it and re-said it, and with every time a growing consciousness that impossibility should not stop her. At last impossibility shaped itself into a plan.

"I am going down to see Jane Lewis, mamma," was Eleanor's announcement at luncheon.

"To-day, Eleanor?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"But Mr. Carlisle will be here, and he will not like it."

"He will have enough of me by and by, ma'am. I

shall maybe never have another chance of taking care of Jane. I know she wants to see me, and I am going to-day. And if she wants me very much, I shall stay all night; so you need not send."

"What will Mr. Carlisle say to all that?"

"He will say nothing to it, if you do not give him an opportunity, mamma. I am going, at all events."

"Eleanor, I am afraid you have almost too much independence, for one who is almost a married woman."

"Is independence a quality entirely given up, ma'am, when 'the ring is on'?"

"Certainly! I thought you knew that. You must make up your mind to it. You are a noble creature, Eleanor; but my comfort is that Mr. Carlisle will know how to manage you. I never could, to my satisfaction. I observe he has brought you in pretty well."

Eleanor left the room; and if the tide of her independence could have run higher, her mother's words would have furnished the necessary provocative.

Jane Lewis was a poor girl in the village; the daughter of one who had been Eleanor's nurse, and who now old and infirm and unable to do much for herself or others, watched the declining days of her child without the power to give them much relief. Jane was dying with consumption. The other member of the family was the old father, still more helpless; past work and dependent on another child for all but the house they lived in. That, in earlier days, had been made their own. Eleanor was their best friend, and many a day, and night too, had been a sunbeam of comfort in the poor house. She now, when the day was far enough on its wane, provided herself with a little basket of grapes, ordered her pony, and rode swiftly down to the village; not without attendance this time, though confessing bitterly to herself the truth of her mother's allegations. At the cottage door she took the basket; ordered the pony

should come for her next morning at eight o'clock, and went into the cottage; feeling as if she had for a little space turned her back upon troublesome people and things and made herself free. She went in softly, and was garrulously welcomed by her old nurse and her husband. It was so long since they had seen her! and she was going to be such a great lady! and they knew she would not forget them nevertheless. It was not flattery. It was true speech. Eleanor asked for Jane, and with her basket went on into the upper little room where the sick girl lay. There felt, when she had got above the ground floor, as if she was tolerably safe.

It was a little low room under the thatch, in which Eleanor now hid herself. A mere large closet of a room, though it boasted of a fireplace, happily. A small lattice under the shelving roof let in what it could of the light of a dying November day. The bed with its sick occupant, two chairs, a little table, and a bit of carpet on the floor, were all the light revealed. Eleanor's welcome here was also most sincere; less talkative, it was yet more glad than that given by the old couple down stairs; a light shone all over the pale face of the sick girl, and the weary eye kindled, at sight of her friend.

Extreme neatness was not the characteristic of this little low room, simply for want of able hands to ensure it. Eleanor's first work was to set Jane to eating grapes; her next, to put the place in tidy order. "Lady Rythdale shall be useful once more in her life," she thought. She brushed up the floor, swept the hearth, demolished cobwebs on the walls, and rubbed down the chairs. She had borrowed an apron and cap from old Mrs. Lewis. The sick girl watched her with eager eyes.

"I can't abear to see you a doing of that, Miss Eleanor," she exclaimed.

"Hush, Jane! Eat your grapes."

"You've a kind heart," said the girl sighing; "and

it's good when them that has the power has the feelings."

"How are your nights now, Jane?"

"They're tedious—I lie awake so; and then I get coughing. I am always so glad to see the light come in the mornings! but it's long a coming now. I can't get nobody to hear me at night if I want anything."

"Do you often want something?"

"Times, I do. Times, I get out of wanting, because I can't have—and times I only want worse."

"What do you want, Jane?"

"Well, Miss Eleanor,—I conceit I want to see somebody. The nights is very long—and in the dark and by myself—I gets feared."

To Eleanor's dismay she perceived Jane was weeping.

"What in the world are you afraid of, Jane? I never saw you so before."

"Tisn't of anything in *this* world, Miss Eleanor," said Jane. Her face was still covered with her hands, and the grapes neglected.

Eleanor was utterly confounded. Had Jane caught her feeling? or was this something else?

"Are you afraid of spirits, Jane?"

"No, Miss Eleanor."

"What is it, then? Jane, this is something new. I never saw you feeling so before."

"No, ma'am—and I didn't. But there come a gentleman to see me, ma'am."

"A gentleman to see you? What gentleman?"

"I don't know, Miss Eleanor; only he was tall, and pale-like, and black hair. He asked me if I was ready to die—and I said I didn't know what it was I wanted if I wasn't; and he told me——Oh, I know I'll never have rest no more!"

A burst of weeping followed these words. Eleanor felt as if a thunderbolt had broken at her feet; so terri-

ble to her, in her own mood, was this revelation of kindred feeling. She stood by the bedside, dismayed, shocked, a little disposed to echo Jane's despairing prophecy in her own case.

"Did he say no more to you, Jane?"

"Yes, Miss Eleanor, he did; and every word he said made me feel worser. His two eyes was like two swords going through me; and they went through me so softly, ma'am, I couldn't abear it. They killed me."

"But, Jane, he did not mean to kill you. What did he say?"

"I don't know, Miss Eleanor—he said a many things; but they only made me feel—how I ain't fit——"

There was no more talking. The words were broken off by sobs. Eleanor turned aside to the fire-place and began to make up the fire, in a blank confusion and distress; feeling, to use an Arabic phrase, as if the sky had fallen. She could give no comfort; she wanted it herself. The best she could think of, was the suggestion that the gentleman would come again, and that then he would make all things plain. Would he come while Eleanor was there, that afternoon? What a chance! But she remembered it was very unlikely. He was to preach in the evening; he would want to keep all his strength for that. And now the question arose, how should she get to the barn.

The first thing was to soothe Jane. Eleanor succeeded in doing that after a while. She made her a cup of tea and a piece of toast, and took some herself; and sat in the darkening light musing how she should do. One good thing was secure. She had not been followed up this afternoon, nor sent for home; both which disagreeables she had feared. Jane dozed, and she thought; and the twilight fell deeper and deeper.

There was after all only one way in which Eleanor could accomplish her desire; though she turned the

matter all round in her head before she would see it, or determine upon adopting it. No mortal that she knew could be trusted with the secret—if she meant to have it remain a secret; and that at all costs was Eleanor's desire. Julia might have been trusted, but Julia could not have been brought along. Eleanor was alone. She thought, and trembled, and made up her mind.

The hour must be waited for when people from the village would be setting forth to go to Brooks' farm. It was dark then, except some light from the stars. Eleanor got out a bonnet of Jane's, which the owner would never use again; a close little straw bonnet; and tied over it a veil she had taken the precaution to bring. Her own flat and mantle she laid away out of sight, and wrapped round her instead a thick camlet cloak of the sick girl's, which enveloped her from head to feet. Pretty good disguise—thought Eleanor to herself. Mr. Carlisle would not find her out in this. But there was no danger of *his* seeing her. She was all ready to steal out; when she suddenly recollected that she might be missed, and the old people in terror make a hue and cry after her. That would not do. She stripped off the bonnet again and awoke the sleeping girl.

"Jane," she said bending over her, "I have somebody else to see—I am going out for a little while. I will be back and spend the night with you. Tell your mother to leave the door open for me, if she wishes to go to bed; and I will look after you. Now go to sleep again."

Without waiting for Jane to think about it, Eleanor slipped out, bonnet in hand, and went softly down stairs. The old man was already gone to bed in a little inner chamber; the old mother sat dozing by the fire. Standing behind her Eleanor put on the bonnet, and then gently opening the house door, with one step was in the road. A moment stood still; but the next moment set off with quick, hasty steps.

It was damp and dark ; the stars were shining indeed, yet they shed but a glimmering and doubtful light upon Eleanor's doubtful proceeding. She knew it was such ; her feet trembled and stumbled in her way, though that was as much with the fever of determination as with the hinderings of doubt. There was little occasion for bodily fear. People, she knew, would be going to the preaching, all along the way ; she would not be alone either going or coming. Nevertheless it was dark, and she was where she had no business to be ; and she hurried along rather nervously till she caught sight of one or two groups before her, evidently bent for the same place with herself. She slackened her footsteps then, so as to keep at a proper distance behind them, and felt that for the present she was secure. Yet, it was a wild, strange walk to Eleanor. Secure from personal harm she might be, and was, no doubt ; but who could say what moral consequences might follow her proceeding. What if her mother knew it ? what if Mr. Carlisle ? Eleanor felt she was doing a very questionable thing ; but the desire to do it on her part amounted to a necessity. She *must* hear these words that would be spoken in the barn to-night. They would be on the subject that of all others interested her, and spoken by the lips that of all others could alone speak to the purpose. So Eleanor felt ; so was in some measure for her the truth ; and amid all her sense of doubt and danger and inward trembling, there was a wild thrill of delight at accomplishing her object. She would hear—yes, she would hear—what Mr. Rhys had to say to the people that night. Nobody should ever know it ; neither he nor others ; but if they *did*, she would run all risks rather than be balked.

It was a walk never to be forgotten. Alone, though near people that knew not she was near ; in the darkness of night ; the stars shewing only the black forms of trees

and hedgerows, and a line of what could not be called light, where the road ran; keeping in the shadow of the hedge and hurrying along over the undiscerned footway;—it was a novel experience for one who had been all her life so tended and sheltered as she. It was strange and disagreeable. Waymarks did not seem familiar; distances seemed long. Eleanor wished the walk would come to an end.

It did at last. The people,—there was a stream of them now pouring along the road, indeed so many that Eleanor was greatly surprised at them,—turned off into a field, within which at a few rods from the road stood the barn in question; at the door of which one or two lamps hung out shewed that something unusual was going on there. Mr. Brooks had several barns, the gables and roofs of which looked like a little settlement in the starlight, not far off; but this particular barn stood alone, and was probably known to the country people from former occasions; for they streamed towards it and filed in without any wavering or question. So Eleanor followed, trembling and wondering at herself; passed the curtain that hung at the door, and went in with the others.

The place that received them was a great threshing-floor, of noble proportions, for a threshing-floor. Perhaps Mr. Brooks had an eye to contingencies when he built it. On two sides it was lined with grain, rising in walls of cereal sweetness to a great height; and certainly, if Eleanor had been in many a statelier church, she had never been in one better ventilated or where the air was more fragrantly scented. But a new doubt struck her. Could it be right to hold divine service in such a place? Was this a fit or decorous temple, for uses of such high and awful dignity? The floor was a bare plank floor; footfalls echoed over it. The roof was high indeed; but no architect's groining of beams reminded one

that the place was set apart to noble if not sacred purposes. Nothing but common carpenter's joinery was over her head, in the roof of the barn. The heads of wheat ears instead of carved cornices and pendants; and if the lights were dim, which they certainly were, it did not seem at all a religious light. Only at the further end, where a table and chair stood ready for the preacher, some tall wax candles threw a sufficient illumination for all present to see him well. Was that his pulpit? What sort of preaching could possibly be had from it?

Eleanor looked round the place. There was no really lighted part of it except about that table and chair. It was impossible for people to see each other well from a little distance off, unless thoroughly well known.

Eleanor felt there was very little danger indeed that anybody should recognize her identity, in Jane's bonnet and cloak. That was so much comfort. Another comfort was, that the night was mild. It was not like November. A happy circumstance for everybody there; but most of all for the convalescent preacher, whose appearance Eleanor looked for now with a kind of fearful anxiety. If he should have been hindered from coming, after all! Her heart beat hard. She stood far back behind most of the people, near the door by which she had entered. A few benches and chairs were in the floor, given up to the use of the women and the aged people. Eleanor marvelled much to see that there were some quite old people among the company. The barn was getting very full.

"There is a seat yonder," said some one touching her on the elbow. "Won't you have it?"

Eleanor shook her head.

"You had better," he said kindly; "there's a seat with nobody in it; there's plenty of room up there. Come this way."

Eleanor was unwilling to go further forward, yet did

not like to trust her voice to speak, nor choose to draw attention to herself in any way. She was needlessly afraid. However, she yielded to the instance of her kind neighbour and followed him among the crowd to the spot he had picked out for her. She would have resisted further, if she had known where this spot was ; for it was far forward in the barn, more than half way between the door and the candle-lighted table, and in the very midst of the assembly. There was no help for it now ; she could not go back ; and Eleanor was thankful for the support the seat gave her. She was trembling all over. A vague queer feeling of her being about something wrong, not merely in the circumstances of her getting there, but in the occasion itself, haunted her with a sort of superstition. Could such an assembly be rightfully gathered for such a purpose in such a place ? Could it be right, to speak publicly of sacred things with such an absence of any public recognition of their sacredness ? In a bare barn ? an unconsecrated building, with no beauty or dignity of observance to give homage to the work and the occasion ? Eleanor was a compound of strange feelings ; till she suddenly became conscious of a stir in the gathered throng, and then heard on the plank floor a step that she intuitively knew. As the step and the tall figure that it bore passed close by her on the way to the table, an instant sense of quiet and security settled down on her. Nervousness died away. There was one person there now that she knew ; the question of his coming was settled, and her coming was not for nothing ; and moreover, whatever business he was concerned in was right, in all its parts ! She was sure of that. She watched him, with a great bound of exultation in her heart ; watched him kneel down for prayer as he reached his place ; and wondered, while awe mixed with her wonder, how he could do it, before and amongst all those people as he was ; not shut off in a distant chancel alone by

himself, but there with everybody crowding upon him. Her wonder had but little space to exercise itself. After a few minutes Mr. Rhys rose and gave out a hymn; and every thought of Eleanor's was concentrated on the business and on the speaker.

She knew nothing about hymns except that they were sung in church; all such lyrics were unfamiliar to her, though the music of them was not. It was always stately music, with an organ, in the swell of which the words were lost. There could be no organ in a barn. Instead of that, the whole assembly rose to their feet and struck out together into a sweet air which they sung with a vast deal of spirit. No difficulty about hearing the words now; the music was not at a distance; the words were coming from every lip near Eleanor, and were sung as if they were a personal matter. Perhaps she was in a mood to be easily touched; but the singing did reach her and move her profoundly.

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

The sense of this, Eleanor did not thoroughly understand, yet the general spirit of it was not to be mistaken. And the soft repetition of the last line struck her heart sorrowfully. Here was her want breathed out again. "And wipe my weeping eyes.—I'll bid farewell to every fear, and wipe my weeping eyes." Eleanor was perhaps the only one who did not sing; nobody paid better attention.

The hymn was followed by a prayer. If the one had touched Eleanor, the other prostrated her in the dust. She heard a child of God speaking to his Father; with a simplicity of utterance, a freedom of access, and a glow of happy affections, evident in every quietly spoken

word, that testified to his possession of the heavenly treasures that were on his tongue ; and made Eleanor feel humbled and poor with an extreme and bitter sense of want. Her heart felt as empty as a deep well that had gone dry. This man only had ever shewed her what a Christian might be ; she saw him standing in a glory of heavenly relationships and privileges and character, that were a sort of transfiguration. And although Eleanor comprehended but very imperfectly wherein this glory might lie, she yet saw the light, and mourned her own darkness. Eleanor's mind went a great way during the minutes of that prayer ; according to the strange fashion in which the work of many days is sometimes done in one. She was sorry when it ended ; however, every part of the services had a vivid new interest for her. Another hymn, and reading, during which her head was bowed on her breast in still listening ; it was curious, how she had forgot all about being in a barn ; and then the sermon began. She had to raise up her head when that began ; and after a while Eleanor could not bear her veil, and threw it back, trusting that the dim light would secure her from being known. But she felt that she *must* see as well as hear, this one time.

Of all subjects in the world to fall in with Eleanor's mood, the sermon to-night was on *peace*. The peace that the Lord Jesus left as his parting gift to his people ; the peace that is not as the world giveth. How the world gives, Mr. Rhys briefly set forth ;—with one hand, to take away with the other—as a handful of gold, what proves but a clutch of ashes—as the will-o'-the-wisp gives, promise but never possession. Eleanor would not have much regarded these words from any other lips ; they accorded with her old theory of disgust with the world. From Mr. Rhys she did regard them, because no word of his fell unheeded by her. But when he went on from that to speak of Christ's gift, and how

that is bestowed—his speech was as bitter in her heart as it was sweet in his mouth. The peace he held up to her view,—the joy in which a child of God lives and walks—and dies; the security of every movement, the confidence in every action, the rest in all turmoil, the fearlessness in all danger; the riches in the midst of poverty, the rejoicing even in time of sorrow; the victory over sin and death, wrought in him as well as for him;—Eleanor's heart seemed to die within her, and at the same time started in a struggle for life. Had the words been said coldly, or as matter of speculative belief, or as privilege not actually entered into, it would have been a different thing. Eleanor might have sat back in her chair and listened and sorrowed for herself in outward quiet. But there was unconscious testimony from every tone and look of the speaker that he told the people but of what he knew. The pale face was illumined by a high grave light, that looked like a halo from the unseen world; it was nothing less to Eleanor; and the mouth in its general set so sober, broke occasionally into a smile so sweet, that it straitened Eleanor's heart with its unconscious tale-telling. As the time went on, the speaker began to illustrate his words by instances; instances of the peace which Christians have shewn to be theirs in all sorts of circumstances where the world would have given them none, or would have surely withdrawn the gift once made. In poverty—in pain—in loneliness—in the want of all things—in the close prospect of suffering, and in the presence of death. Wonderful instances they were! glorious to the power of that Redeemer, who had declared, "Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." How the speaker's eye flushed and fired; flushed with tears, and fired with triumph; what a tint rose on the pale cheek, testifying to the exultation he

felt; with what tremulous distinctness the words were sometimes given—and heard in the breathless stillness to the furthest corner of the place. It was too much at last. Feeling was wrought too high. Eleanor could not bear it. She bowed her head on her hand to hide the tears that would come, and only struggled to keep her sobs quiet that she might not lose a word. There were other sobs in the assembly that were less well controlled; they were audible; Eleanor could not endure to hear them, for she feared her excitement would become unmanageable. Nevertheless by strong effort she succeeded in keeping perfectly still; though she dared not raise her head again till the last hymn and prayers were over, and the people made a general stir all round her. Then she too rose up and turned her face in the direction whither they were all turning, towards the door.

She made her way out with the crowd blindly, conscious that it was all over—that was the prominent thought—and yet that work was done which would never be “over” for her. So conscious of this, that she had no care either of her whereabouts or of her walk home, except in an incidental sort of way. She got out into the starlight, and stepped over the grassy sward of the field in a maze; she hardly felt the ground; it was not till she reached the fence and found herself in the road, that Eleanor really roused up. Then it was necessary to turn in one direction or the other; and Eleanor could not tell which to take. She stood still and tried to collect herself. Which side of the road was the barn? She could not remember; she was completely confused and turned about; and in the starlight she could be sure of no tree or fence or other landmark. She stood still, while the people poured past her and in groups or in pairs took the one direction or the opposite. Part went one way and part went the other, to Wiglands and to Rythdale. Eleanor longed to ask which way somebody

was going, but she was afraid of betraying herself. She did not dare. Yet if she took the wrong turning, she might find herself in the Rythdale valley, a great distance from Wiglands, and with a lone road to traverse all the way back again. Her heart beat. What should she do? The people poured past her, dividing off right and left; they would be all scattered soon to their several homes, and she would be left alone. She must do something quickly. Yet she shrank very much from speaking, and still stood by the fence trembling and hesitating.

"Are you alone?" said a voice at her shoulder that she knew very well. If a cannon had gone off at her feet, it would not have startled Eleanor more. The tone of the question implied that *she* was known. She was too startled to answer. The words were repeated. "Are you alone?"

Eleanor's "yes" got out, with nothing distinguishable except the last letter.

"I have a waggon here," said he. "Come with me."

The speaker waited for no answer to the words which were not a request; and acting as decidedly as he had spoken, took hold of Eleanor's arm and led her forward to a little vehicle which had just drawn up. He helped her into it, took his place beside her, and drove away; but he said not another word.

It was Mr. Rhys, and Eleanor knew that he had recognized her. She sat in a stupor of confusion and shame. What would he think of her! and what could she make him think? Must she be a bold, wild girl in his estimation for ever? Why would he not speak? He drove on in perfect silence. Eleanor must say something to break it. And it was extremely difficult, and she had to be bold to do that.

"I see you recognize me, Mr. Rhys," she said.

"I recognized you in the meeting," he answered in

perfect gravity. Eleanor felt it. She was checked. She was punished.

“Where are you taking me?” she asked after a little more time.

“I will take you wherever you tell me you desire.”

Grave and short. Eleanor could not bear it.

“You think very hardly of me, Mr. Rhys,” she said; “but I was spending the night at a poor girl’s house in the village—she is ill, and I was going to sit up with her—and I knew you were to preach at that place—and—” Eleanor’s voice choked and faltered.

“And what could prompt you to go alone, Miss Powle?”

“I wanted to go—” faltered Eleanor. “I knew it would be my last chance. I felt I *must* go. And I could go no way but alone.”

“May I ask what you mean by ‘your last chance?’”

“My last chance of hearing what I wanted to hear—what I can’t help thinking about lately. Mr. Rhys, I am not happy.”

“Did you understand what you heard to-night?”

“In part I did—I understood, Mr. Rhys, that you have something I have not,—and that I want.” Eleanor spoke with great emotion.

“The Lord bless you!” he said, with a tenderness of tone that broke her down at once. “Trust Jesus, Miss Powle. He can give it to you. He only can. Go to him for what you want, and for understanding of what you do not understand. Trust the Lord! Make your requests known to him, and believe that he will hear your prayers and answer them, and more than fulfil them. Now where shall I set you down?”

“Anywhere—” Eleanor said as well as she could. “Here, if you please.”

“Here is no house. We are just at the entrance of the village.”

"This is a good place then," said Eleanor. "I do not want anybody to see me."

"Miss Powle," said her guardian, and he spoke with such extreme gravity that Eleanor was half frightened,—“did you come without the knowledge of your friends at home?”

"Yes, to the place we have come from. Mamma knew I was going to spend the night with a sick girl in the village—she did not know any more."

"It was very dangerous!" he said in the same tone.

"I knew it. I risked that. I felt I must come."

"You did very wrong," said her companion. It hurt her that he should say it, and have cause; but she was so miserable before, that it could be felt only in the dull way in which pain added to pain sometimes makes itself known. She was subdued, humbled, ashamed. She said nothing more, nor did he, until after passing two or three houses they arrived at a spot where the trees and the road were the only village representatives; a clear space, with no house very near, and no person in sight. Mr. Rhys drew up by the side of the road, and helped Eleanor out of the waggon. He said only "Good night," but it was said kindly and sympathizingly, and with the earnest grasp of the hand that Eleanor remembered. He got into the waggon again, but did not drive away as she expected; she found he was walking his horse and keeping abreast of her as she walked. Eleanor hurried on, reached Mrs. Lewis's cottage, paused a second at the door to let him see that she had reached her stopping place, and went in.

All still; the embers dying on the hearth, a cricket chirruping under it. Mrs. Lewis was gone to bed, but had not covered up the fire for fear her young lady might want it. Eleanor did not dare sit down there. She drew the bolt of the house door; then softly went up the stairs to Jane's room. Jane was asleep. Eleanor

felt thankful, and moved about like a shadow. She put the brands together in a sort of mechanical way; for she knew she was chilly and needed fire bodily, though her spirit was in a fever. The night had turned raw, and the ride home had been not so cheering mentally as to do away with the physical influence of a cold fog. Eleanor put off bonnet and cloak, softly piled the brands together and coaxed up a flame; and sat down on a low stool on the hearth to spread her hands over it, to catch all the comfort she could.

Comfort was not near, however. Jane waked up in a violent fit of coughing; and when that was subdued or died away, as difficult a fit of restlessness was left behind. She was nervous and uneasy; Eleanor had only too much sympathy with both moods, nevertheless she acted the part of a kind and delicate nurse; soothed Jane and ministered to her, even spoke cheerful words; until the poor girl's exhausted mind and body sank away again into slumber, and Eleanor was free to sit down on the hearth and fold her hands.

Then she began to think. Not till then. Indeed what she did then at first was not to think, but to recall in musing all the scenes and as far as possible all the words of that evening; with a consciousness behind this all the while that there was hard thinking coming. Eleanor went dreamily over the last few hours, looking in turn at each image so stamped upon her memory; felt over again the sermon, the hymns, the prayers; then suddenly broke from her musings to face this consciousness that was menacing her. Set herself to think in earnest.

What was it all about? Eleanor might well have shunned it, might well grasp it in desperation with a sudden inability to put it off any longer. Down in her heart, as strong as the keep of an old castle, and as obstinate-looking, was the feeling—"I do not want to

marry Mr. Carlisle." Eleanor did not immediately discern its full outline and proportions, in the dim confusion which filled her heart; but a little steady looking revealed it, revealed it firm and clear and established there. "I do not want to marry him—I will not marry him"—she found the words surging up from this stronghold. Pride and ambition cowering somewhere said, "Not ever? Do you mean, not at all? not ever?"—"Not ever!"—was the uncompromising answer; and Eleanor's head dropped in agony. "Why?" was the next question. And the answer was clear and strong and ready. "I am bent upon another sort of life than his life—I am going another way—I *must* live for aims and objects which he will hate and thwart and maybe hinder—I *will not* walk with him in his way—I cannot walk with him in mine—I cannot, oh, I do not wish, to walk with him at all!" Eleanor sat face to face with this blank consciousness, staring at it, and feeling as if the life was gradually ebbing out of her. What was she to do? The different life and temper and character, and even the face, of Mr. Rhys, came up to her as so much nobler, so much better, so much more what a man should be, so much more worthy of being liked. But Eleanor strove to put that image away, as having very truly she said to herself, nothing to do with the present question. However she thought she could not marry Mr. Carlisle; and intrenched herself a little while in that position, until the next subject came up for consideration; how she could escape from it? What reason could be assigned? Only this religious one could be given—and it might be, it might well be, that Mr. Carlisle would not on his part consider that reason enough. He would certainly hope to overcome the foundation on which it stood; and if he could not, Eleanor was obliged to confess to herself that she believed he loved her to that degree that he would rather have her a religious wife than not his

wife at all. What should Eleanor do? Was she not bound? had she not herself given him claims over her which she had no right to disallow? had he not a right to all her fulfilment of them? Eleanor did not love him as he loved her; she saw that with singular and sudden distinctness; but there again, when she thought of *that* as a reason for not fulfilling her contract, she was obliged to own that it would be no reason to Mr. Carlisle. He never had had ground to suppose that Eleanor gave him more than she had expressed; but he was entirely content with what he had and his own confidence that he could cultivate it into what he pleased. There was no shaking loose from him in that way. As Eleanor sat on the hearth and looked at the ashes, in reality looking at Mr. Carlisle, her own face grew wan at what she saw there. She could give him no reason for changing their relations to each other, that would make him hold her a bit the less closely, no, nor the less fondly. What could Eleanor do? To go on and be Mr. Carlisle's wife, if necessary; give him all the observance and regard that she could, that she owed him, for having put herself in a false position where she could not give him more;—Eleanor saw nothing else before her. But one thing beside she would do. She would make Mr. Carlisle clearly and fully understand what sort of a woman he must expect in her. She would explain thoroughly what sort of a life she meant to lead. Justly stated, what would that be?

Eleanor thought; and found herself determined, heart and soul, to follow the path of life laid before her that evening. Whether "peace" could visit her, in the course that seemed to lie through her future prospects, Eleanor much doubted; but at any rate she would have the rest of a satisfied conscience. She would take the Bible for her rule. Mr. Rhys's God should be her God, and with all she had of power and ability she would serve him.

Dim as religious things still were to her vision, one thing was not dim, but shinningly clear; the duty of every creature to live the devoted servant of that Lord to whom he belongs by creation and redemption both. Here Eleanor's heart fixed, if it had a fixed point that tumultuous night; but long before it settled anywhere her thoughts were bathed in bitter tears; in floods of weeping that seemed fit to wash her very heart away. It occurred to Eleanor, if they could, how much trouble would be saved! She saw plenty before her. But there was the gripe of a fear and a wish upon her heart, that overmastered all others. The people had sung a hymn that evening, after the first one; a hymn of Christian gladness and strength, to an air as spirited as the words. Both words and air rang in her mind, through all the multifarious thoughts she was thinking; they floated through and sounded behind them like a strain of the blessed. Eleanor had taken one glance at Mr. Rhys while it was singing; and the remembrance of his face stung her as the sight of an angel might have done. The counter recollection of her own misery in the summer at the time she was ill; the longing want of that security and hope and consequent rest of mind, was vividly with her too. Pushed by fear and desire, Eleanor's resolution was taken. She saw not the way clear, she did not know yet the "wicket-gate" towards which Bunyan's Pilgrim was directed; like him however she resolved to "keep the light in her eye, and run."

The fire had died all out; the grey ashes were cold; she was very cold herself, but did not know it. The night had waned away, and a light had sprung in at the window which Eleanor thought must be the dawn. It was not; it was the old moon just risen, and struggling through the fog. But the moon was the herald of dawn; and Eleanor got up from the hearth, feeling old and stiff; as if she had suddenly put on twenty years of age more

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than she came to the village with. The room was quite too cold for Jane, she remembered ; and softly she went up and down for kindling and lighted up the fire again. Till she had done that, she felt grey and stern, like the November morning ; but when the fire crackled and sparkled before her, and gave its cheery look and comforting warmth to her chilled senses, some curious sympathy with times that were gone and that she dared not hope to see again, smote Eleanor with a softer sorrow ; and she wept a very rain of new tears. These did her good ; they washed some of the bitterness out of her ; and after that she sat thinking how she should manage ; when Mr. Rhys's parting words suddenly recurred to her. A blanker ignorance how they should be followed, can scarcely be imagined, in a person of general sense and knowledge. Nevertheless, she bowed herself on the hearth, surely not more in form than in feeling, and besought of that One whose aid she knew not how to ask, that he would yet give it to her and fulfil all her desires. Eleanor was exhausted then. She sat in a stupor of resting, till the faint illumination of the moon was really replaced by a growing and broadening light of day. The night was gone.

CHAPTER IX.

"Look, a horse at the door,
And little King Charles is snarling;
Go back, my lord, across the moor,
You are not her darling."

ELEANOR set out early to go home. She would not wait to be sent for. The walk might set her pulses in motion again perhaps. The fog was breaking away under the sun's rays, but it had left everything wet; the morning was excessively chill. There was no grass in her way however, and Eleanor's thick shoes did not fear the road, nor her feet the three miles of way. The walk was good. It could not be said to be pleasant; yet action of any kind was grateful and helpful. She saw not a creature till she got home.

Home struck her with new sorrow, in the sense of the disappointment she was going to bring to so many there. She made her own room without having to speak to anybody; bathed and dressed for breakfast. How grave her face was, this morning! She could not help that. And she felt that it grew graver, when entering the breakfast room she found Mr. Carlisle there.

"What have you done to yourself?" said he after they were seated at the breakfast table.

"Taken a walk this morning."

"Judicious! in this air, which is like a suspended shower-bath! Where did you go?"

"On the Wiglands road."

"If I had come in time, I should have taken you up

before me and cut short such a proceeding. Mrs. Powle, you do not make use of your authority."

"Seems hardly worth while, when it is on the point of expiring," said Mrs. Powle blandly, with a smiling face.

"Why Eleanor had to come home," said Julia; "she spent the night in the village. She could not help walking—unless mamma had sent the carriage or something for her."

"Spent the night in the village!" said Mr. Carlisle.

"Eleanor took it into her head that she must go to take care of a sick girl there—the daughter of her nurse. It is great foolishness, I think, but Eleanor will do it."

"It don't agree with her very well," said Julia. "How you do look, Eleanor, this morning!"

"She looks very well," said the Squire—"for all I see. Walking won't hurt her."

What Mr. Carlisle thought he did not say. When breakfast was over he drew Eleanor off into the library.

"How do you do this morning?" said he stopping to look at her.

"Not very well."

"I came early, to give you a great gallop to the other end of the moor—where you wished to go the other day. You are not fit for it now?"

"Hardly."

"Did you sit up with that girl last night?"

"I sat up. She did not want much done for her. My being there was a great comfort to her."

"Far too great a comfort. You are a naughty child. Do you fancy, Eleanor, your husband will allow you to do such things?"

"I must try to do what is right, Macintosh."

"Do you not think it will be right that you should pleasure me in what I ask of you?" he said very gently and with a caressing action which took away the edge of the words.

"Yes—in things that are right," said Eleanor, who felt that she owed him all gentleness because of the wrong she had done.

"I shall not ask you anything that is not right ; but if I should,—the responsibility of your doing wrong will rest on me. Now do you feel inclined to practise obedience a little to day ?"

"No, not at all," said Eleanor honestly, her blood rousing.

"It will be all the better practice. You must go and lie down and rest carefully, and get ready to ride with me this afternoon, if the weather will do. Eh, Eleanor ?"

"I do not think I shall want to ride to-day."

"Kiss me, and say you will do as I bid you."

Eleanor obeyed, and went to her room feeling wretched. She must find some way quickly to alter this state of things—if she could alter them. In the mean time she had promised to rest. It was a comfort to lock the door and feel that for hours at any rate she was alone from all the world. But Eleanor's heart fainted. She lay down, and for a long time remained in motionless passive dismay ; then nature asserted her rights and she slept.

If sleep did not quite "knit up the ravelled sleeve of care" for her, Eleanor yet felt much less ragged when she came out of her slumber. There was some physical force now to meet the mental demand. The first thing demanded was a letter to Mr. Carlisle. It was in vain to think to tell him in spoken words what she wanted him to know ; he would cut them short or turn them aside as soon as he perceived their drift, before she could at all possess him with the facts of the case. Eleanor sat down before dressing, to write her letter, so that no call might break her off until it was done.

It was a weary, anxious, sorrowful writing ; done with some tears and some mute prayers for help ; with images constantly starting into her mind that she had to put

aside together with the hot drops they called forth. The letter was finished, when Eleanor was informed that Mr. Carlisle waited for her.

"To ride, I suppose," she thought. "I will not go." She put on a house dress and went down to the library, where her mother and Mr. Carlisle were together; looking both of them so well pleased!

"You are not dressed for riding!" he said, taking her into his arms.

"As you see—" returned Eleanor.

"I have brought a new horse for you. Will you change your dress?"

"I think not. I am not equal to anything new."

"Have you slept?"

"Yes, but I have not eaten; and it takes both to make muscle. I cannot even talk to you till after tea."

"Have you had no luncheon?"

"I was asleep."

"Mrs. Powle," said the gentleman, "you do not take care of my interests here. May I request you to have this want supplied—I am going to take Eleanor a great gallop presently; she must have something first." He put Eleanor in an easy chair as he spoke, and stood looking at her. Probably he saw some unusual lines of thought or care about the face, but it was by no means less fine for that. Mr. Carlisle liked what he saw. Refreshments came; and he poured out chocolate for her and served her with an affectionate supervision that watched every item. But when after a very moderate meal Eleanor's hand was stretched out for another piece of bread, he stopped her.

"No," he said; "no more now. Now go and put on your habit."

"But I am very hungry," said Eleanor.

"No matter—you will forget it in five minutes. Go and put on your habit."

Eleanor hesitated; thought that perhaps after all the ride would be the easiest way of passing the afternoon; and went.

"Well you do understand the art of command," said Mrs. Powle admiringly. "She would never have done that for me."

Mr. Carlisle did not look surprised, nor gratified, nor in fact shew anything whatever in his looks. Unless it were, that the difference of effects produced by himself and his future mother-in-law, was very much a matter of course. He stood before the fire, with no change at all in his clear hazel eyes, until Eleanor appeared. Then they sparkled. Eleanor was for some reason or other particularly lovely in his eyes to-day.

The horse he had brought for her was a superb Arabian, shewing nerve and fire in every line of his form and starting muscle, from the tips of the ears down to the long fetlock and beautiful hoof. Shewing fire in the bright eye too. A brown creature, with luxuriant flowing mane and tail.

"He is not quite so quiet as Black Maggie," Mr. Carlisle said as he put Eleanor upon his back; "and you must not curb him, Eleanor, or he will run."

They went to the moor; and by degrees getting wonted to her fiery charger and letting him display his fine paces and increase his speed, Eleanor found the sensation very inspiring. Even Black Maggie was not an animal like this; every motion was instinct with life and power, and not a little indication of headstrongness and irritability gave a great additional interest and excitement to the pleasure of managing him. Mr. Carlisle watched her carefully, Eleanor knew; he praised her handling. He himself was mounted on a quiet, powerful creature that did not make much shew.

"If this fellow—what is his name?"

"Tippoo Sultan."

"If he were by any chance to run—would that horse you are riding keep up with him?"

"I hope you will not try."

"I don't mean it—but I am curious. There, Mr. Carlisle, there is the place where I was thrown."

"A villainous looking place. I wish it was mine. How do you like Tippoo?"

"Oh, he is delightful!"

Mr. Carlisle looked satisfied, as he might; for Eleanor's colour had become brilliant, and her face had changed greatly since setting out. Strength and courage and hope seemed to come to her on Tippoo's back, facing the wind on the moor and galloping over the wild, free way. They took in part the route Eleanor had followed that day alone, coming back through the village by a still wider circuit. As they rode more moderately along the little street, if it could be called so; the houses were all on one side; Eleanor saw Mr. Rhys standing at Mrs. Lewis's door; he saw her. Involuntarily her bow in return to his salutation was very low. At the same instant Tippoo started, on a run to which all his former galloping had been a gentle amble. This was not ungentle; the motion had nothing rough; only Eleanor was going in a straight line over the ground at a rate that took away her breath. She had presence of mind not to draw the curb rein, but she felt that she could hardly endure long the sort of progress she was making through the air. It did not seem to be on the ground. Her curiosity was gratified on one point; for after the first instant she found Mr. Carlisle's powerful grey straining close beside her. Nevertheless Tippoo was so entirely in earnest that it was some little time—it seemed a very long one—before the grey could get so close to the brown and so far up with him that Mr. Carlisle could lay his hand upon the thick brown mane of Tippoo and stoop forward to speak to him. As soon as

that was done, once or twice, Tippoo's speed gradually relaxed ; and a perseverance in his master's appeals to his reason and sense of duty, brought the wild creature back to a moderate pace and the air of a civilized horse. Mr. Carlisle transferred his grasp from the mane to Eleanor's hand.

"Eleanor, what did you do that for?"

"Do what? I did nothing."

"You curbed him. You drew the rein, and he considered himself insulted. I told you he would not bear it."

"He has had nothing to bear from me. I have not drawn the curb at all, Robert."

"I must contradict you. I saw you do it. That started him."

Eleanor remained silent and a little pale. Was Mr. Carlisle right? The ride had until then done her a great deal of good ; roused up her energies and restored in some degree her spirit ; the involuntary race together with the sudden sight of Mr. Rhys, had the effect to bring back all the soberness which for the moment the delight and stir of the exercise had dissipated. She went on pondering various things. Eleanor's letter to Mr. Carlisle was in the pocket of her habit, ready for use ; she determined to give it him when he left her that evening ; that was one of her subjects of thought. Accordingly he found her very abstracted and cold the rest of the way ; grave and uninterested. He fancied she might have been startled by her run on Tippoo's back, though it was not very like her ; but he did not know what to fancy. And true it is, that a remembrance of fear had come up to Eleanor after that gallop. *Afraid* she was not, at the time ; but she felt that she had been in a condition of some peril from which her own forces could not have extricated her ; that brought up other considerations, and sadly in Eleanor's mind some words of

the hymn they had sung last night in the barn floated over among her thoughts.

"When I can read my title clear,
To mansions in the skies,
I'll bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

Very simple words; words that to some ears have become trite with repetition; but thoughts that went down into the depths of Eleanor's heart and garri-
oned themselves there, beyond the power of any attacks to dis-
lodge. Her gravity and indifference piqued Mr. Carlisle,
curiosity and affection both. He spent the evening in
trying to overcome them; with very partial success.
When he was leaving her, Eleanor drew the letter from
her pocket.

"What is this?" said he taking it.

"Only a letter for you."

"From you! The consideration of that must not be
postponed." He broke the seal. "Come, sit down
again. I will read it here."

"Not now! Take it home, Macintosh, and read it
there. Let it wait so long."

"Why?"

"Never mind why. Do! Because I ask you."

"I don't believe I can understand it without you be-
side me," said he smiling, and drawing the letter from
its envelope while he looked at her.

"But there is everybody here," said Eleanor glancing
at another part of the room where the rest of the family
were congregated. "I would rather you took it home
with you."

"It is something that requires serious treatment?"

"Yes."

"You are a wise little thing," said he, "and I will
take your advice." He put the letter in his pocket;

then took Eleanor's hand upon his arm and walked her off to the library. Nobody was there; lamplight and firelight were warm and bright. Mr. Carlisle placed his charge in an easy chair by the library table, much to her disappointment; drew another close beside it, and sat down with his arm over the back of hers to read the letter. Thus it ran.

"It is right you should know a change which has taken place in me since the time when I first became known to you. I have changed very much, though it is a change perhaps which you will not believe in; yet I feel that it makes me very different from my old self, and alters entirely my views of almost everything. Life and life's affairs—and aims—do not look to me as they looked a few months ago; if indeed I could be said to have taken any view at all of them then. They were little more than names to me, I believe. They are great realities now.

I do not know how to tell you in what this change in me consists, for I doubt you will neither like it nor believe in it. Yet you *must* believe in it; for I am not the woman I was a little while ago; not the woman you think me now. If I suffered you to go on as you are, in ignorance of it, I should be deceiving you. I have opened my eyes to the fact that this life is not the end of life. I see another beyond,—much more lasting, unknown, strange, perhaps not very distant. The thought of it presses upon me like a cloud. I want to be ready for it—I feel I am not ready—and that before I can be ready, not only my views but my character must be changed. I am determined it shall. For, Mr. Carlisle, there is a Ruler whose government extends over this life and that, whose requisitions I have never met, whose commands I have never obeyed, whom consequently I fear; and until this fear is changed for another feeling I cannot be happy. I will not live the life I have been leading;

careless and thoughtless ; I will be the servant of this Ruler whom hitherto I have disregarded. Whatever his commands are, those I will follow ; at all costs, at any sacrifice ; whatever I have or possess shall be used for his service. One thing I desire ; to be a true servant of God, and not fear his face in displeasure. To secure that, I will let everything else in the world go.

"I wish you to understand this thoroughly. It will draw on consequences that you would not like. It will make me such a woman as you would not, I feel, wish your wife to be. I shall follow a course of life and action that in many things, I know, would be extremely distasteful to you. Yet I must follow them—I can do no other—I dare do no other. I cannot live as I have lived. No, not for any reward or consideration that could be offered me. Nor to avoid any human anger.

I think you would probably choose never to see me at the Priory, rather than to see me there such a woman as I shall be. In that case I shall be very sorry for all the disagreeable consequences which would to you attend the annulling of the contract formed between us. My own part of them I am ready to bear.

ELEANOR POWLE."

The letter was read through almost under Eleanor's own eyes. She looked furtively, as she could, to see how Mr. Carlisle took it. He did not seem to take it at all ; she could find no change in his face. If the brow slightly bent before her did slightly knit itself in sterner lines than common, she could not be sure of it, bent as it was ; and when he looked up, there was no such expression there. He looked as pleasant as possible.

"Do you want me to laugh at you ?" he said.

"That was not the precise object I had in writing," said Eleanor soberly.

"I do not suppose it, and yet I feel very much like

laughing at you a little. So you think you can make yourself a woman I would not like,—eh, my darling?"

He had drawn Eleanor's head down to his shoulder, within easy reach of his lips, but he did not kiss her. His right hand smoothed back the masses of her beautiful hair, and then rested on her cheek while he looked into the face thus held for near inspection; much as one handles a child. The touch was light and caressing, and calm as power too. Eleanor breathed quick. She could not bear it. She forced herself back where she could look at him.

"You are taking it lightly, but I mean it very seriously," she said. "I think I could—I think I shall. I did not write you such a letter without very deep reason."

He still retained his hold of her, and in his right hand had captured one of hers. This hand he now brought to his lips, kissing and caressing it.

"I do not think I understand it yet," he said. "What are you going to do with yourself? Is it your old passion for a monastic life come up again? do you want the old Priory built up, and me for a Father Confessor?"

Did he mean ever to loose his hold of the little hand he held so lightly and firmly? Never! Eleanor's head drooped.

"What is it, Eleanor?"

"It is serious work, Mr. Carlisle; and you will not believe me."

"Make me serious too. Tell me a little more definitely what dreadful thing I am to expect. What sort of a woman is my wife going to be?"

"Such a one as you would not have, if you knew it;—such a one as you never would have sought, if I had known it myself earlier; I feel sure." Eleanor's colour glowed all over her face and brow; nevertheless she spoke steadily.

"Enigmatical!" said Mr. Carlisle. "The only thing I understand is this—and this—" and he kissed alternately her cheek and lips. "*Here* is my wife—*here* is what I wish her to be. It will be all right the twenty-first of next month. What will you do after that, Eleanor?"

Eleanor was silent, mortified, troubled, silenced. What was the use of trying to explain herself?

"What do you want to do, Eleanor? Give all your money to the poor? I believe that is your pet fancy. Is that what you mean to do?"

Eleanor's cheeks burnt again. "You know I have very little money to give, Mr. Carlisle. But I have determined to give *myself*."

"To me?"

"No, no. I mean, to duties and commands higher than any human obligation. And they may, and probably will, oblige me to live in a way that would not please you."

"Let us see. What is the novelty?"

"I am going to live—it is right I should tell you, whether you will believe me or not,—I am going to live henceforth not for this world but the other."

"How?" said he, looking at her with his clear brilliant eyes.

"I do not know, in detail. But you know, in the Church service, the pomps and vanities of the world are renounced; whatever that involves, it will find me obedient."

"What has put this fancy in your head, Eleanor?"

"A sense of danger, first, I think."

"A sense of danger! Danger of what?"

"Yes. A feeling of being unready for that other life to which I might at any time go;—that other world, I mean. I cannot be happy so." She was agitated; her colour was high; her nerves trembled.

"How came this 'sense of danger' into your head? what brought it, or suggested it?"

"When I was ill last summer—I felt it then. I have felt it since. I feel my head uncovered to meet the storm that may at any time break upon it. I am going to live, if I can, as people live whom you would laugh at; you would call them fanatics and fools. It is the only way for me to be happy; but you would not like it in one near you."

"Go in a black dress, Eleanor?"

She was silent. She very nearly burst into tears, but prevented that.

"You can't terrify me," said Mr. Carlisle, lazily throwing himself back in his chair. "I don't get up a 'sense of danger' as easily as you do, darling. One look in your face puts all that to flight at once. I am safe. You may do what you like."

"You would not say that by and by," said Eleanor.

"Would I not?" said he, rousing up and drawing her tenderly but irresistibly to his arms again. "But make proper amends to me for breaking rules to-night, and you shall have *carte-blanche* for this new fancy, Eleanor. How are you going to ask my forgiveness?"

"You ought to ask mine—for you will not attend to me."

"Contumacious?" said he lightly, touching her lips as if they were a goblet and he were taking sips of the wine;—"then I shall take my own amends. You shall live as you please, darling, only take me along with you."

"You will not go."

"How do you know?"

"Neither your feeling nor your taste agree with it."

"What *are* you going to do!" said he half laughing, holding her fast and looking down into her face. "My little Eleanor! Make yourself a grey nun, or a blue Puritan? Grey becomes you, darling; it makes a

duchess of you ; and blue is set off by this magnificent brown head of yours. I will answer for my taste in either event ; and I think you could bear, and consequently I could, all the other colours in the rainbow. As for your idea, of making yourself a woman that I would not like, I do not think you can compass it. You may try. I will not let you go too far."

"You cannot hinder it, Macintosh," said Eleanor in a low voice.

"Kiss me!" said he laughingly.

Eleanor slowly raised her head from his shoulder and obeyed, so far as a very dainty and shyly given permission went ; feeling bitterly that she had brought herself into bonds from which only Mr. Carlisle's hand could release her. She could not break them herself. What possible reason could she assign ? And so she was in his power.

"Cheeks hot, and hands cold,—" said Mr. Carlisle to himself as he walked away through the rooms. "I wish the twenty first were to-morrow !" He stopped in the drawing-room to hold a consultation of some length with Mrs. Powle ; in which however he confided to her no more than that the last night's attention to her nurse's daughter had been quite too much for Eleanor, and he should think it extremely injudicious to allow it again. Which Mrs. Powle had no idea of doing.

Neither had Eleanor any idea of attempting it. But she spent half that night in heart-ache and in baffled searchings for a path out of her difficulties. What could she do ? If Mr. Carlisle *would* marry her, she saw no help for it ; and to disgust him with her would be a difficult matter. For oh, Eleanor knew, that though he would not like a religious wife, he had good reason to trust his own power of regulating any tendency of that sort which might offend him. Once his wife, once let that strong arm have a right to be round her perma-

nently; and Eleanor knew it would be an effectual bar against whatever he wished to keep at a distance.

Eleanor was armed with no Christian armour; no helmet or shield of protection had she; all she had was the strength of fear, and the resolute determination to seek until she should find that panoply in which she would be safe and strong. Once married to Mr. Carlisle, and she felt that her determination would be in danger, and her resolution meet another resolution with which it might have hard fighting to do. Ay, and who knew whether hers would overcome! She must not finish this marriage; yet how induce Mr. Carlisle to think of her as she wished?

"I declare," said Mrs. Powle coming into her room the next day, "that one night's sitting up, has done the work of a week's illness upon you, Eleanor! Mr. Carlisle is right."

"In what?"

"He said you must not go again."

"I think he is somewhat premature in arranging my movements."

"Don't you like it?" said Mrs. Powle laughing a little. "You must learn to submit to that. I am glad there is somebody that can control you, Eleanor, at last. It does me good. It was just a happiness that you never took anything desperate into your head, for your father and you together were more than a match for me; and it's just the same with Julia. But Julia really is growing tame and more reasonable, I think, lately."

"Good reason why," thought Eleanor moodily. "But that is a better sort of control she is under."

"I am charged with a commission to you, Eleanor."

"What is it, ma'am?"

"To find out what particular kind of jewels you prefer. I really don't know, so am obliged to ask you—which was not in my commission."

"Jewels, mamma!"

"Jewels, my lady."

"O mamma! don't talk to me of jewels!"

"Nor of weddings, I suppose; but really I do not see how things are to be done unless they are to be talked about. For instance, this matter of your liking in jewellery—I think rubies become you, Eleanor; though to be sure there is nothing *I* like so well as diamonds. What is the matter?"

For Eleanor's brown head had gone down on the table before her and her face was hidden in her hands. She slowly raised it at her mother's question.

"Mamma, Mr. Carlisle does not know what he is doing!"

"Pray what do you mean?"

"He thinks he is marrying a person who will be gay and live for and in the world, as he lives—and as he would wish me. Mamma, I will not! I never will. I never shall be what he likes in that respect. I mean to live a religious life."

"A religious life! What sort of a life is that?"

"It is what you do not like—nor he."

"A religious life! Eleanor, you do not suppose Mr. Carlisle would wish his wife to lead an irreligious life?"

"Yes—I do."

"I should not like you to tell *him* that," said Mrs. Powle colouring with anger. "How dare you say it? What sort of a religious life do you want to live?"

"Such a one as the Bible bids, mamma," Eleanor said in a low voice and drooping her head. "Such a one as the Prayer Book recommends, over and over."

"And you think Mr. Carlisle would not like that? What insinuations you are making against us all, Eleanor. For of course, I, your mother, have wished you also to live this irreligious life. We are a set of heathens together. Dr. Cairnes too. He was delighted with it."

"It changes nothing, mamma," said Eleanor. "I am resolved to live in a different way; and Mr. Carlisle would not like it; and if he only knew it, he would not wish to marry me; and I cannot make him believe it."

"You have tried, have you?"

"Yes, I have tried. It was only honest."

"Well I did not think you were such a fool, Eleanor! and I am sure he did not. Believe you, you little fool? he knows better. He knows that he will not have had you a week at the Priory before you will be too happy to live what life he pleases. He is just the man to bring you into order. I only wish the wedding-day was to-morrow."

Eleanor drew herself up, and her face changed from soft and sorrowful to stubborn. She kept silence.

"In this present matter of jewels," said Mrs. Powle returning to the charge, "I suppose I am to tell him that a plain set of jet is as much as you can fancy; or that, as it would be rather uncommon to be married in black, you will take bugles. What he will say I am sure I don't know."

"You had better not try, mamma," said Eleanor. "If the words you last said are true, and I should be unable to follow my conscience at Rythdale Priory, then I shall never go there; and in that case the jewels will not be wanted, except for somebody else whose taste neither bugles nor jet would suit."

"Now you have got one of your obstinate fits on," said Mrs. Powle, "and I will go. I shall be a better friend to you than to tell Mr. Carlisle a word of all this, which I know will be vanished in another month or two; and if you value your good fortune, Eleanor, I recommend you to keep a wise tongue between your teeth in talking to him. I know one thing—I wish Dr. Cairnes, or the Government, or the Church, or whoever has it in hand, would keep all dissenting fools from coming to

Wiglands to preach their pestiferous notions here ! and that your father would not bring them to his house ! That is what I wish. Will you be reasonable, and give me an answer about the jewels, Eleanor ?”

“ I cannot think about jewels, mamma.”

Mrs. Powle departed. Eleanor sat with her head bowed in her hands ; her mind in dim confusion, through which loomed the one thought, that she must break this marriage. Her mother’s words had roused the evil as well as the good of Eleanor’s nature ; and along with bitter self-reproaches and longings for good, she already by foretaste champed the bit of an authority that she did not love. So, while her mind was in a sea of turmoil, there came suddenly, like a sun-blink upon the confusion, a soft question from her little sister Julia. Neither mother nor daughter had taken notice of her being in the room. The question came strangely soft, for Julia.

“ Eleanor, do you love Jesus ?”

Eleanor raised her head in unspeakable astonishment, startled and even shocked, as one is at an unheard-of thing. Julia’s face was close beside her, looking wistful and anxious, and tender also. The look struck Eleanor’s heart. But she only stared.

“ Do you ?” said Julia wistfully.

It wrought the most unaccountable convulsion in Eleanor’s mind, this little dove’s feather of a question, touching the sore and angry feelings that wrestled there. She flung herself off her chair, and on her knees by the table sobbed dreadfully. Julia stood by, looking as sober as if she had been a ministering angel.

Eleanor knew what the question meant—that was all. She had heard Mr. Rhys speak of it ; she had heard him speak of it with a quiver on his lip and a flush in his face, which shewed her that there was something in religion that she had never fathomed, nor ever before

suspected ; there was a hidden region of joy the entrance to which was veiled from her. To Eleanor the thing would have been a mere mystery, but that she had seen it to be a reality ; once seen, that was never to be forgotten. And now, in the midst of her struggles of passion and pain, Julia's question came innocently asking whether *she* were a sharer in that unearthly wonderful joy which seemed to put its possessor beyond the reach of struggles. Eleanor's sobs were the hard sobs of pain. As wisely as if she had really been a ministering angel, her little sister stood by silent ; and said not another word until Eleanor had risen and taken her seat again. Nor then either. It was Eleanor that spoke.

"What do you know about it, Julia?"

"Not much," said the child. "*I* love the Lord Jesus—that is all,—and I thought, perhaps, from the way you spoke, that you did. Mr. Rhys would be so glad."

"He? Glad? what do you mean, Julia?"

"I know he would ; because I have heard him pray for you a great many times."

"No—no," said Eleanor turning away,—"*I* know nothing but fear. I do not feel anything better. And they want me to think of everything else in the world, but this one thing!"

"But you will think of it, Eleanor, won't you?"

Eleanor was silent and abstracted. Her sister watched her with strange eyes for Julia, anxiously observant. The silence lasted some time.

"When does Mr. Rhys—Is he going to preach again, Julia, that you know of?"

"I guess not. He was very tired after he preached the other night ; he lay on the couch and did not move the whole next day. He is better to-day."

"You have seen him this morning."

"O yes. I see him every day ; and he teaches me a great many things. But he always prays for you."

Eleanor did not wish to keep up the conversation, and it dropped. And after that, things went on their train.

It was a very fast train, too; and growing in importance and thickening in its urgency of speed. Every day the preparations converged more nearly towards their great focus, the twenty-first of December. Eleanor felt the whirl of circumstances, felt borne off her feet and carried away with them; and felt it hopelessly. She knew not what to urge, that should be considered sufficient reason either by her mother or Mr. Carlisle for even delaying, much less breaking off the match. She was grave and proud, and unsatisfactory, as much as it was in her nature to be, partly on purpose; and Mr. Carlisle was not satisfied, and hurried on things all the more. He kept his temper perfectly, whatever thoughts he had; he rode and walked with Eleanor, when she would go, with the same cool and faultless manner; when she would not, he sometimes let it pass and sometimes made her go; but once or twice he failed in doing this; and recognized the possibility of Eleanor's ability to give him trouble. He knew his own power however; on the whole he liked her quite as well for it.

"What is the matter with you, my darling?" he said one day. "You are not like yourself."

"I am not happy," said Eleanor. "I told you I had a doubt unsettled upon my mind; and till that doubt is put at rest I cannot be happy; I cannot have peace; you will take no pleasure in me."

"Why do you not settle it then?" said Mr. Carlisle, quietly.

"Because I have no chance. I have not a moment to think, in this whirl where I am living. If you would put off the twenty-first of next month to the twenty-first of some month in the spring—or summer—I might have a breathing place, and get myself in order. I cannot, now."

"You will have time to think, love, when you get to the Priory," Mr. Carlisle observed in the same tone. An absolute tone.

"Yes. I know how that would be!" Eleanor answered bitterly. "But I can take no pleasure in anything,—I cannot have any rest or comfort,—as long as I know that if anything happened to me—if death came suddenly—I am utterly unready. I cannot be happy so."

"I think I had better send Dr. Cairnes to see you," said Mr. Carlisle. "He is in duty bound to be the family physician in all things spiritual where they need him. But this is morbid, Eleanor. I know how it is. These are only whims, my darling, that will never outlive that day you dread so much."

He had drawn her into his arms as he spoke; but in his touch and his kiss Eleanor felt or fancied something masterful, which irritated her.

"If I thought that, Mr. Carlisle," she said,—“if I knew it was true,—that day would never come!”

Mr. Carlisle's self-control was perfect; so was his tact. He made no answer at all to this speech; only gave Eleanor two or three more of those quiet ownership kisses. No appearance of discomposure in his manner or in his voice when he spoke; still holding her in his arms.

"I shall know how to punish you one of these days for this," he said. "You may expect to be laughed at a little, my darling, when you turn penitent. Which will not hinder the moment from coming."

And so, dismissing the matter and her with another light touch of her lips, he left her.

"Will it be so?" thought Eleanor. "Shall I be so within his control, that I shall even sue to him to forget and pardon this word of my true indignation? Once his wife—once let the twenty-first of December come—

and there will be no more help for me. What shall I do?"

She was desperate, but she saw no opening. She saw however the next day that Mr. Carlisle was coldly displeased with her. She was afraid to have him remain so; and made conciliations. These were accepted immediately and frankly, but so at the same time as made her feel she had lost ground and given Mr. Carlisle an advantage; every inch of which he knew and took. Nobody had seen the tokens of any part of all this passage of arms; in three days all was just as it had been, except Eleanor's lost ground. And three days more were gone before the twenty-first of December.

CHAPTER X.

"And, once wed,
So just a man and gentle, could not choose
But make my life as smooth as marriage-ring."

"MACINTOSH, do you ever condescend to do such a thing as walk?—take a walk, I mean?"

"You may command me,—” he answered somewhat lazily.

"May I? For the walk; but I want further to make a visit in the village."

"You may make twenty, if you feel inclined. I will order the horses to meet us there—shall I? or do you not wish to do anything but walk to-day?"

"O yes. After my visit is paid, I shall be ready."

"But it will be very inconvenient to walk so far in your habit. Can you manage that?"

"I expect to enlighten you a good deal as to a woman's power of managing," said Eleanor.

"Is that a warning?" said he, making her turn her face towards him. Eleanor gratified him with one of her full mischievous smiles.

"Did anybody ever tell you," said he continuing the inspection, "that you were handsome?"

"It never was worth anybody's while."

"How was that?"

"Simply, that he would have gained nothing by it."

"Then I suppose I should not, or you think so?"

"Nothing in the world. Mr. Carlisle, if you please, I will go and put on my hat."

The day was November in a mild mood ; pleasant enough for a walk ; and so one at least of the two found it. For Eleanor, she was in a divided mood ; yet even to her the exercise was grateful, and brought some glow and stir of spirits through the body to the mind. At times, too, now, she almost bent before what seemed her fate, in hopelessness of escaping from it ; and at those times she strove to accommodate herself to it and tried to propitiate her captor. She did this from a two-fold motive. She did fear him, and feared to have him anything but pleased with her ; half slumbering that feeling lay ; another feeling she was keenly conscious of. The love that he had for her ; a gift that no woman can receive and be wholly unmoved by it ; the affection she herself had allowed him to bestow, in full faith that it would not be thrown away ; that stung Eleanor with grief and self-reproach ; and made her at times question whether her duty did not lie where she had formally engaged it should. At such times she was very subdued in gentleness and in observance of Mr. Carlisle's pleasure ; subdued to a meekness foreign to her natural mood, and which generally, to tell the truth, was accompanied by a very unwonted sedateness of spirits also ; something very like the sedateness of despair.

She walked now silently the first half of the way ; managing her long habit in a way that she knew Mr. Carlisle knew, though he took no open notice of it. The day was quite still, the road footing good. A slight rime hung about the distance ; veiled faintly the Rythdale woods, enshrouded the far-off village, as they now and then caught glimpses of it, in its tuft of surrounding trees. Yet near at hand, the air seemed clear and mellow ; there was no November chill. It was a brown world, however, through which the two walked ; life and freshness all gone from vegetation ; the leaves in most cases fallen from the trees, and where they still

hung looking as sear and withered as frost and decay could make them.

"Do you abhor *all* compliments?" said Mr. Carlisle, breaking a silence that for some time had been broken only by the quick ring of their footsteps upon the ground.

"No, sir."

"That is frank; yet I am half afraid to present the one which is on my lips."

"Perhaps it is not worth while," said Eleanor, with a gleam of a smile which was very alluring. "You are going to tell me, possibly, that I am a good walker."

"I do not know why I should let you silence me. No, I was not going to tell you that you are a good walker; you know it already. The compliment of beauty, that you scorned, was also perhaps no news to you. What I admire in you now, is something you do not know you have;—and I do not mean you shall, by my means."

Eleanor's glance of amused curiosity, rewarded him.

"Are you expecting now, that I shall ask for it?"

"No; it would not be like you. You do not ask me for anything that you can help, Eleanor. I shall have to make myself cunning in inventing situations of need—that will drive you to it. It is pleasanter to me than you can imagine, to have your eyes seek mine with a request in them."

Eleanor coloured.

"There are the fieldfares!" she exclaimed presently.

"What is there melancholy in that?" said Mr. Carlisle laughingly.

"Nothing. Why?"

"You made the announcement as if you found it so."

"I was thinking of the time I saw the fieldfares last,—when they were gathering together preparing for their taking flight; and now here they are back again! It

seems so little while—and yet it seems a long while too. The summer has gone.”

“I am glad it has!” said Mr. Carlisle. “And I am glad Autumn has had the discretion to follow it. I make my bow to the fieldfares.”

“You will not expect me to echo that,” said Eleanor.

“No. Not now. I will make you do it by and by.”

He thought a good deal of his power, Eleanor said to herself as she glanced at him; and sighed as she remembered that she did so too. She was afraid to say anything more. It had not been so pleasant a summer to her that she would have wished to live it over again; yet was she very sorry to know it gone, for more reasons than it would do to let Mr. Carlisle see.

“You do not believe that?” he said, coming with his brilliant eyes to find her out where her thoughts had plunged her. Eleanor came forth of them immediately and answered.

“No more, than that one of those fieldfares, if you should catch it and fasten a leash round its neck, would say it was well done that its time of free flying was over.”

“My bird shall soar higher from the perch where I will place her, than ever she ventured before.”

“Ay, and stoop to your lure, Mr. Carlisle!”

He laughed at this flash, and took instant tribute of the lips whose sauciness tempted him.

“Do you wonder,” he said softly, that I want to have my tassel-gentle on my hand?”

Eleanor coloured again, and was wisely silent.

“I am afraid you are not ambitious, Eleanor.”

“Is that such a favourite vice, that you wish I were?”

“Vice! It is a virtue, say rather; but not for a woman,” he added in a different tone. “No, I do not wish you any more of it, Nellie, than a little education will give.”

"You are mistaken, though, Macintosh. I am very ambitious," Eleanor said gravely.

"Pray in what line? Of being able to govern Tippoo without my help?"

"Is it Tippoo that I am to ride to-day?"

"Yes. I will give you a lesson. What line does your ambition take, darling?"

"I have a great ambition—higher and deeper than you can think—to be a great deal better than myself."

She said it lowly and seriously, in a way that sufficiently spoke her earnestness. It was just as well to let Mr. Carlisle know now and then which way her thoughts travelled. She did not look up till the consciousness of his examining eyes upon her made her raise her own. His look was intent and silent, at first grave, and then changing into a very sunny smile with the words—

"My little Saint Eleanor?"—

They were inimitably spoken; it is difficult to say how. The graciousness, and affection, and only a very little tender raillery discernible with them, at once smote and won Eleanor. What could she do to make amends to this man for letting him love her, but to be his wife and give him all the good she could? She answered his smile, and if hers was shy and slight it was also so gentle that Mr. Carlisle was more than content.

"If you have no other ambition than that," he said, "then the wise man is proved wrong who said that moderation is the sloth of the soul, as ambition is its activity."

"Who said that?"

"Rochefoucauld, I believe."

"Like him—" said Eleanor.

"How is that? wise?"

"No indeed; false."

"He was a philosopher, and you are not even a student in that school."

"He was not a true man; and that I know by the lights he never knew."

"He told the time of day by the world's clock, Eleanor. You go by a private sun-dial of your own."

"The sun is right, Mr. Carlisle! He was a vile old maligner of human nature."

"Where did you learn to know him so well?" said Mr. Carlisle, amused.

"You may well ask. I used to study French sentences out of him; because they were in nice little detached bits; and when I came to understand him I judged him accordingly."

"By the sun. Few men will stand that, Eleanor. Give an instance."

"We are in the village."

"I see it."

"I told you I wanted to make a visit, Macintosh."

"May I go too?"

"Why certainly; but I am afraid you will not know what to do with yourself. It is at the house of Mrs. Lewis,—my old nurse."

"Do you think I never go into cottages?" said he smiling.

Eleanor did not know what to make of him; however, it was plain he would go with her into this one; so she took him in, and then had to tell who he was, and blushed for shame and vexation to see her old nurse's delighted and deep curtseys at the honour done her. She made her escape to see Jane; and leaving Mr. Carlisle to his own devices, gladly shut herself into the little stairway which led up from the kitchen to Jane's room. The door closed behind her, Eleanor let fall the spirit-mask she wore before Mr. Carlisle,—wore consciously for him and half unconsciously for herself,—and her feet went slowly and heavily up the stair. A short stairway it was, and she had short time to linger; she did not

linger; she went into Jane's room. Eleanor had not been there since the night of her watch.

It was like coming out of the woods upon an open champaign, as she stood by the side of the sick girl. Jane was lying bolstered up, as usual; disease shewed no stay of its ravages since Eleanor had been there last; all that was as it had been. The thin cheek with its feverish hue; the unnaturally bright eyes; the attitude of feebleness. But the mouth was quiet and at rest to day; and that mysterious region of expression around the eyes had lost all its seams and lines of care and anxiety; and the eyes themselves looked at Eleanor with that calm full simplicity that one sees in an infant's eyes, before care or doubt has ever visited them. Eleanor was silent with surprise, and Jane spoke first.

"I am glad to see you, Miss Eleanor."

"You are better, Jane, to-day."

"I think—I am almost well," said Jane, pausing for breath as she spoke, and smiling at the same time.

"What has happened to you since I was here last? You do not look like the same."

"Ma'am, I am not the same. The Lord's messenger has come—and I've heard the message—and O, Miss Eleanor, I'm happy!"

"What do you mean, Jane?" said Eleanor; though it struck coldly through all her senses what it did mean.

"Dear Miss Eleanor," said Jane, looking at her lovingly—"I wish you was as happy as I be!"

"What makes you happy?"

"O ma'am, because I love Jesus. I love Jesus!"

"You must tell me more, Jane. I do not understand you. The other night, when I was here, you were not happy."

"Miss Eleanor, I didn't know him then. Since then I've seen how good he is—and how beautiful—and what he has done for me;—and I'm happy!"

"Can't you tell me more, Jane? I want to understand it."

"Miss Eleanor, it's hard to tell. I'm thinking, one can't tell another—but the Lord must just shew himself."

"What has he shewn to you?" said Eleanor gloomily. The girl lifted her eyes with a placid light in them, as she answered,

"He has showed me how he loves me—and that he has forgiven me—O how good he is, Miss Eleanor!—and how he will take me home. And now I don't want for to stay—no more now."

"You were afraid of dying, the other night, Jane."

"That's gone,"—said the girl expressively.

"But how did it go?"

"I can't say, ma'am. I just saw how Jesus loves me—and I felt I loved him—and then how could I be feared, Miss Eleanor? when all's in his hand."

Eleanor stood still, looking at the transformed face before her, and feeling ready to sink on the floor and cry out for very sorrow of heart. Had this poor creature put on the invisible panoply which made her dare to go among the angels, while Eleanor's own hand was empty? could not reach it? could not grasp it? She stood still with a cold brow and dark face.

"Jane, I wish you could give me what you have got—so as not to lose it yourself."

"Jesus will give it to you, Miss Eleanor," said the girl with a brightening eye and smile. "I know he will."

"I do not know of him, Jane, as you do," Eleanor said gravely. "What did you do to gain this knowledge?"

"I? I did nought, ma'am—what could I do? I just laid and cried in my bitterness of heart—like the night you was here, ma'am; till the day that Mr. Rhys came again and talked—and prayed—O he prayed!—and my trouble went away and the light came. O Miss Eleanor,

if you would hear Mr. Rhys speak ! I don't know how ; —but if you'd hear him, you'd know all that man can tell."

Eleanor stood silent. Jane looked at her with eyes of wistful regard, but panting already from the exertion of talking.

"But how are you different to-day, Jane, from what you were the other night?—except in being happy."

"Ma'am," said the girl speaking with difficulty, for she was excited,—“then I was blind. Now I see. I ain't different no ways—only I have seen what the Lord has done for me—and I know he loves me—and he's forgiven me my sins. He's forgiven me!—And now I go singing to myself, like, all the day and the night too, 'I love the Lord, and my Lord loves me.'"

The water had slowly gathered in Jane's eyes, and the cheek flushed; but her sweet happy regard never varied except to brighten.

"Jane, you must talk no more," said Eleanor. "What can I do for you? only tell me that."

"Would Miss Eleanor read a bit?"

What would become of Mr. Carlisle's patience? Eleanor desperately resolved to let it take care of itself, and sat down to read to Jane at the open page where the girl's look and finger had indicated that she wished her to begin. And the very first words were, 'Let not your heart be troubled.'

Eleanor felt her voice choke; then clearing it with a determined effort she read on to the end of the chapter. But if she had been reading the passage in its original Greek, she herself would hardly have received less intelligence from it. She had a dim perception of the words of love and words of glory of which it is full; she saw that Mr. Rhys's "helmet" was at the beginning of it, and the "peace" he had preached of, at the end of it; yet those words which ever since the day they were

spoken have been a bed of rest to every heart that has loved their Author, only straitened Eleanor's heart with a vision of rest afar off.

"I must go now, dear Jane," she said as soon as the reading was ended. "What else would you like, that I can do for you?"

"I'm thinking I want nothing, Miss Eleanor," said the girl calmly, without moving the eyes which had looked at Eleanor all through the reading. "But—"

"But what? speak out."

"Mother says you can do anything, ma'am."

"Well, go on."

"Dolly's in trouble, ma'am."

"Dolly? why she was to have been married to that young Earle?"

"Yes, ma'am, but—mother 'll tell you, Miss Eleanor—it tires me. He has been disappointed of his money, has James; and Dolly, she couldn't lay up none, 'cause of home;—and she's got to go back to service at Tenby; and they don't know when they'll come together now."

A fit of coughing punished Jane for the exertion she had made, and put a stop to her communication. Eleanor staid by her till it was over, would not let her say another word, kissed her, and ran down to the lower room in a divided state of spirits. There she learnt from Mrs. Lewis the details of Jane's confused story. The young couple wanted means to furnish a house; the money hoarded for the purpose had been lent by James in some stress of his parents' affairs and could not now be got back again; and the secret hope of the family, Eleanor found, was that James might be advanced to the gamekeeper's place at Rythdale, which they took care to inform her was vacant; and which would put the young man in possession of better wages and enable him to marry at once. Eleanor just heard all this, and hur-

ried out to the gate where Mr. Carlisle was waiting for her. Her interview with Jane had left her with a desperate feeling of being cut off from the peace and light her heart longed for ; and yet she was glad to see somebody else happy. She stood by Mr. Carlisle's side in a sort of subdued mood. There also stood Miss Broadus.

"Now Eleanor! here you are. Won't you help me? I want you two to come in and take luncheon with us. I shall never get over it if you do—I shall be so pleased. So will Juliana. Now do persuade this gentleman!—will you? We'll have luncheon in a little while—and then you can go on your ride. You'll never do it if you do not to-day."

"It is hardly time, Miss Broadus," said Mr. Carlisle. "We must ride some miles before luncheon."

"I think it must be very near time," said Miss Broadus. "Do, Eleanor, look and tell us what it is. Now you are here, it would be such a good chance. Well, Eleanor? And the horses can wait."

"It is half past twelve by me, Miss Broadus. I do not know how it is by the world's clock."

"You can not take her word," said Mr. Carlisle, preparing to mount Eleanor. "She goes by an old-fashioned thing, that is always behind the time—or in advance of it."

"Well, I declare!" said Miss Broadus. "That beautiful little watch Mr. Powle gave her! Then you will come in after your ride?"

If they were near enough at luncheon time, Mr. Carlisle promised that should be done; and leaving Miss Broadus in startled admiration of their horses, the riders set forth. A new ride was promised Eleanor; they struck forward beyond Wiglands, leaving the road to Rythdale on the left hand. Eleanor was busily meditating on the question of making suit to Mr. Carlisle in James Earle's favour; but not as a question to be decid-

ed; she had resolved she would not do it, and was thinking rather how very unwilling she should be to do it; sensible at the same time that much power was in her hands to do good and give relief, of many kinds; but fixed in the mind that so long as she had not the absolute right and duty of Mr. Carlisle's wife, she would not assume it. Yet between pride and benevolence Eleanor's ride was likely to be scarce a pleasant one. It was extremely silent, for which Tippoo's behaviour on this occasion gave no excuse. He was as gentle as the day.

"What did you find in that cottage to give your thoughts so profound a turn?" said Mr. Carlisle at last.

"A sick girl."

"Cottages do not seem to agree with you, Eleanor."

"That would be unfortunate," said Eleanor rousing up, "for the people in them seem to want me very much."

"Do not let that impose on you," said Mr. Carlisle smiling. "Speaking of cottages—two of my cottages at Rythmoor are empty still."

"O are they!—" Eleanor exclaimed with sudden life.

"What then?"

"Is there anybody you mean to put in them, Mr. Carlisle?"

"No. Is there anybody *you* mean to put in them?"

"I know just who would like to have one."

"Then I know just who shall have it—or I shall know, when you have told me."

Did he smile to himself that his bait had taken? He did not smile outwardly. Riding close up to her, he listened with a bright face to the story which Eleanor gave with a brighter. She had a private smile at herself. Where were her scruples now? There was no help for it.

"It is one of your—one of the under gardeners at

Rythdale; his name is James Earle. I believe he is a good fellow."

"We will suppose that. What has he done to enlist your sympathy?"

"He wants to marry a sister of this girl I have been to see. They have been long betrothed; and James has been laying up money to set up housekeeping. They were to have been married this autumn,—now;—but James had lent all his earnings to get his old father out of some distress, and they are not forthcoming; and all Dolly's earnings go to support hers."

"And what would you like to do for them, Eleanor?"

Eleanor coloured now, but she could not go back. "If you think well of Earle, and would like to have him in one of the empty cottages at Rythmoor, I should be glad."

"They shall go in, the day we are married; and I wish you would find somebody for the other. Now having made a pair of people happy and established a house, would you like a gallop?"

Eleanor's cheeks were hot, and she would very much; but she answered, "One of Tippoo's gallops?"—

"You do not know them yet. You have tried only a mad gallop. Tippoo!" said Mr. Carlisle stooping and striking his riding glove against the horse's shoulder,—
"I am going a race with you, do you hear?"

His own charger at the same time sprang forward, and Tippoo to match! But such a cradling flight through the air, Eleanor never knew until now. There seemed no exertion; there was no jar; a smooth, swift, arrowy passage over the ground, like what birds take under the clouds. This was the gentlest of gallops, certainly, and yet it was at a rare speed that cleared the miles very fast and left striving grooms in the distance. Eleanor paid no attention to anything but the delight of motion; she did not care where or how far she was car-

ried on such magical hoofs ; but indeed the ride was beyond her beat and she did not know the waymarks if she had observed them. A gradual slackening of this pace of delight brought her back to the earth and her senses again.

"How was that?" said Mr. Carlisle. "It has done you no harm."

"I do not know how it was," said Eleanor, caressing the head and neck of the magnificent animal she rode,— "but I think this creature has come out of the Arabian Nights. Tippoo is certainly an enchanted prince."

"I'll take care he is not disenchanted, then," said Mr. Carlisle. "That gallop did us some service. Do you know where we are?"

"Not in the least."

"You will know presently."

And accordingly, a few minutes of fast riding brought them to a lodge and a gate.

"Is this Rythdale?" said Eleanor, who had noticed the manner of the gate-opener.

"Yes, and this entrance is near the house. You will see it in a moment or two."

It appeared presently, stately and lovely, on the other side of an extensive lawn ; a grove of spruce firs making a beautiful setting for it on one side. The riders passed round the lawn, through a part of the plantations, and came up to the house at the before-mentioned left wing. Mr. Carlisle threw himself off his horse and came to Eleanor.

"What now, Macintosh?"

"Luncheon."

"O, I do not want any luncheon."

"I do. And so do you, love. Come!"

"Macintosh," said Eleanor bending down with her hand resting on his shoulder to enforce her request, "I do not want to go in!"

"I cannot take you any further without rest and refreshment; and we are too far from Miss Broadus's now. Come, Eleanor!"—

He took her down, and then observing the discomposed colour of Eleanor's cheek, he went on affectionately, as he was leading her in,—“What is there formidable in it, Nellie? Nothing but my mother and luncheon; and she will be much pleased to see you.”

Eleanor made no answer; she doubted it; at all events the pleasure would be all on one side. But the reception she got justified Mr. Carlisle. Lady Rythdale was pleased. She was even gracious. She sent Eleanor to her dressing-room to refresh herself, not to change her dress this time; and received her when she came into her presence again with a look that was even benign.

Bound, bound,—Eleanor felt it in everything her eye lit upon; she had thought it all over in the dressing-room, while she was putting in order the masses of hair which had been somewhat shaken down by the gallop. She was irritated, and proud, and afraid of displeasing Mr. Carlisle; and above all this and keeping it down, was the sense that she was bound to him. He did love her, if he also loved to command her; and he would do the latter, and it was better not to hinder his doing the other. But higher than this consideration rose the feeling of *right*. She had given him leave to love her; and now it seemed that his love demanded of her all she had, if it was not all he wanted; duty and observance and her own sweet self, if not her heart's absorbing affection. And this would satisfy Mr. Carlisle, Eleanor knew; she could not ease her conscience with the thought that it would not. And here she was in his mother's dressing-room putting up her hair, and down stairs he and his mother were waiting for her; she was almost in the family already. Eleanor put several feelings in bonds,

along with the abundant tresses of brown hair which made her hands full, and went down.

She looked lovely as she came in ; for the pride and irritation and struggling rebellion which had all been at work, were smothered or at least kept under by her subdued feeling, and her brow wore an air of almost shy modesty. She did not see the two faces which were turned towards her as soon as she appeared, though she saw Mr. Carlisle rise. She came forward and stood before Lady Rythdale.

The feeling of shyness and of being bound were both rather increased by all she saw and felt around her. The place was a winter parlour or sitting-room, luxuriously hung and furnished with red, which made a rich glow in the air. At one side a glass door revealed a glow of another sort from the hues of tropical flowers gorgeously blooming in a small conservatory ; on another side of the room, where Lady Rythdale sat and her son stood, a fire of noble logs softly burned in an ample chimney. All around the evidences of wealth and a certain sort of power were multiplied ; not newly there but native ; in a style of things very different from Eleanor's own simple household. She stood before the fire, feeling all this without looking up, her eye resting on the exquisite mat of Berlin wool on which Lady Rythdale's foot rested. That lady surveyed her.

"So you have come," she said. "Macintosh said he would bring you."

Eleanor answered for the moment with tact and temper almost equal to her lover's, "Madam—you know Mr. Carlisle."

How satisfied they both looked, she did not see ; but she felt it, through every nerve, as Mr. Carlisle took her hands and placed her in a great chair, that she had pleased him thoroughly. He remained standing beside her, leaning on her chair, watching her varying colour

no doubt. A few commonplaces followed, and then the talk fell to the mother and son who had some affairs to speak about. Eleanor's eye went to the glass door beyond which the flowers beckoned her; she longed to go to them; but though feeling that bands were all round her which were drawing her and would draw her to be at home in that house, she would not of her own will take one step that way; she would assume nothing, not even the right of a stranger. So she only looked at the distant flowers, and thought, and ceased to hear the conversation she did not understand. But all this while Lady Rythdale was taking note of her. A pause came, and Eleanor became conscious that she was a subject of consideration.

"You will have a very pretty wife, Macintosh," said the baroness bluntly and benignly.

The rush of colour to her face Eleanor felt as if she could hardly bear. She had much ado not to put up her hands like a child.

"You must have mercy on her, mamma," said Mr. Carlisle, walking off to a bookcase. "She has the uncommon grace of modesty."

"It is no use," said Lady Rythdale. "She may as well get accustomed to it. Others will tell her, if you do not."

There was silence. Eleanor felt displeased.

"Is she as good as she is pretty?" enquired Lady Rythdale.

"No, ma'am," said Eleanor in a low voice. The baroness laughed. Her son smiled. Eleanor was vexed at herself for speaking.

"Mamma, is not Rochefoucauld here somewhere?"

"Rochefoucauld? what do you want of him?"

"I want to call this lady to account for some of her opinions. Here he is. Now Eleanor," said he tossing

the book into her lap and sitting down beside her,—
“justify yourself.”

Eleanor guessed he wanted to draw her out. She was not very ready. She turned over slowly the leaves of the book. Meanwhile Lady Rythdale again engaged her son in conversation which entirely overlooked her; and Eleanor thought her own thoughts; till Mr. Carlisle said with a little tone of triumph, “Well, Eleanor?—”

“What is it?” said Lady Rythdale.

“Human nature, ma’am; that is the question.”

“Only Rochefoucauld’s exposition of it,” said Eleanor.

“Well, go on. Prove him false.”

“But when I have done it by the sun-dial, you will make me wrong by the clock.”

“Instance! instance!” said Mr. Carlisle laughing.

“Take this. ‘La magnanimité est assez bien définie par son nom même; néanmoins on pourroit dire que c’est le bon sens de l’orgueil, et la voie la plus noble pour recevoir des louanges.’ Could anything be further from the truth than that?”

“What is your idea of magnanimity? You do not think ‘the good sense of pride’ expresses it?”

“It is not a matter of calculation at all; and I do not think it is beholden to anything so low as pride for its origin.”

“I am afraid we should not agree in our estimation of pride,” said Mr. Carlisle, amused; “you had better go on to something else. The want of ambition may indicate a deficiency in that quality—or an excess of it. Which, Eleanor?”

“Rochefoucauld says, ‘La modération est comme la sobriété: on voudroit bien manger davantage, mais on craint de se faire mal.’”

“What have you to say against that?”

“Nothing. It speaks for itself. And these two say-

ings alone prove that he had no knowledge of what is really noble in men."

"Very few have," said Mr. Carlisle dryly.

"But you do not agree with him?"

"Not in these two instances. I have a living confutation at my side.

"Her accent is not perfect by any means," said Lady Rythdale.

"You are right, madam," said Eleanor, with a moment's hesitation and a little colour. "I had good advantages at school, but I did not avail myself of them fully."

"I know whose temper is perfect," said Mr. Carlisle, drawing the book from her hand and whispering, "Do you want to see the flowers?"

He was not pleased, Eleanor saw; he carried her off to the conservatory and walked about with her there, watching her pleasure. She wished she could have been alone. The flowers were quite a different society from Lady Rythdale's, and drew off her thoughts into a different channel. The roses looked sweetness at her; the *Dendrobium* shone in purity; myrtles and ferns and some exquisite foreign plants that she knew not by name, were the very prime of elegant refinement and refreshing suggestion. Eleanor plucked a geranium leaf and bruised it and thoughts together under her finger. Mr. Carlisle was called in and for a moment she was left to herself. When he came back his first action was to gather a very superb rose and fasten it in her hair. Eleanor tried to arrest his hand, but he prevented her.

"I do not like it, Macintosh. Lady Rythdale does not know me. Do not adorn me here!"

"Your appearance here is my affair," said he coolly. "Eleanor, I have a request to make. My mother would like to hear you sing."

"Sing! I am afraid I should not please Lady Rythdale."

"Will you please me?"

Eleanor quitted his hand and went to the door of communication with the red parlour, which was by two or three steps, on which she sat down. Her eyes were on the floor, where the object they encountered was Mr. Carlisle's spurs. That would not do; she buried them in the depths of a wonderful white lily, and so sang the old ballad of Sir Patrick Spence. And so sweet and pure, so natural and wild, was her giving of the wild old song, as if it could have come out of the throat of the flower. The thrill of her voice was as a leaf trembles on its stem. No art there; it was unadulterated nature. A very delicious voice had been spoiled by no master; the soul of the singer rendered the soul of the song. The listeners did both of them, to do them justice, hold their breath till she had done. Then Mr. Carlisle brought her in, to luncheon, in triumph; rose and all.

"You have a very remarkable voice, my dear!" said Lady Rythdale. "Do you always sing such melancholy things?"

"You must take my mother's compliments, Nellie, as you would olives—it takes a little while to get accustomed to them."

Eleanor thought so.

"Do not you spoil her with sweet things," said the baroness. "Come here, child—let me look at you. You have certainly as pretty a head of hair as ever I saw. Did you put in that rose?"

"No, ma'am," said Eleanor, blushing with somewhat besides pleasure.

Much to her amazement, the next thing was Lady Rythdale's taking her in her arms and kissing her. Nor was Eleanor immediately released; not until she had been held and looked over and caressed to the content of the old baroness, and Eleanor's cheeks were in a state

of furious protestation. She was dismissed at last with the assurance to Mr. Carlisle that she was "an innocent little thing."

"But she is not one of those people who are good because they have not force to be anything else, Macintosh."

"I hope not."

After this, however, Eleanor was spared further discussion. Luncheon came in; and during the whole discussion of that she was well petted, both by the mother and son. She felt that she could never break the nets that enclosed her; this day thoroughly achieved that conclusion to Eleanor's mind. Yet with a proud sort of mental reservation, she shunned the delicacies that belonged to Rythdale House, and would have made her luncheon with the simplicity of an anchorite on honey and bread, as she might at home. She was very gently overruled, and made to do as she would not at home. Eleanor was not insensible to this sort of petting and care; the charm of it stole over her, even while it made her hopeless. And hopelessness said, she had better make the most of all the good that fell to her lot. To be seated in the heart of Rythdale House and in the heart of its master, involved a worldly lot as fair at least as imagination could picture. Eleanor was made to taste it to-day, all luncheon time, and when after luncheon Mr. Carlisle pleased himself with making his mother and her quarrel over Rochefoucauld; in a leisurely sort of enjoyment that spoke him in no haste to put an end to the day. At last, and not till the afternoon was waning, he ordered the horses. Eleanor was put on Black Maggie and taken home at a gentle pace.

"I do not understand," said Eleanor as they passed through the ruins, "why the House is called 'the Priory.' The priory buildings are here."

"There too," said Mr. Carlisle. "The oldest founda-

tions are really up there; and part of the superstructure is still hidden within the modern walls. After they had established themselves up there, the monks became possessed of the richer sheltered lands of the valley and moved themselves and their headquarters accordingly."

The gloom of the afternoon was already gathering over the old tower of the priory church. The influence of the place and time went to swell the under current of Eleanor's thoughts and bring it nearer to the surface. It would have driven her into silence, but that she did not choose that it should. She met Mr. Carlisle's conversation, all the way, with the sort of subdued gentleness that had been upon her and which the day's work had deepened. Nevertheless, when Eleanor went in at home, and the day's work lay behind her, and Rythdale's master was gone, and all the fascinations the day had presented to her presented themselves anew to her imagination, Eleanor thought with sinking of heart—that what Jane Lewis had was better than all. So she went to bed that night.

CHAPTER XI.

"Why, and I trust, and I may go too. May I not?
What, shall I be appointed hours; as though, belike,
I know not what to take and what to leave? Ha!"

"ELEANOR, what is the matter?" said Julia one day.
For Eleanor was found in her room in tears.

"Nothing—I am going to ruin only;—that is all."

"Going to *what*? Why Eleanor —what is the matter?"

"Nothing—if not that."

"Why Eleanor!" said the little one in growing astonishment, for Eleanor's distress was evidently great, and jumping at conclusions with a child's recklessness,—
"Eleanor!—don't you want to be married?"

"Hush! hush!" exclaimed Eleanor rousing herself up. "How dare you talk so. I did not say anything about being married."

"No, but you don't seem glad," said Julia.

"Glad! I don't know that I ever shall feel glad again—unless I get insensible—and that would be worse."

"Oh Eleanor! what is it? do tell me!"

"I have made a mistake, that is all, Julia," her sister said with forced calmness. "I want time to think and to get right, and to be good—then I could be in peace, I think; but I am in such a confusion of everything, I only know I am drifting on like a ship to the rocks. I can't catch my breath."

"Don't you want to go to the Priory?" said the little one, in a low, awe-struck voice

"I want something else first," said Eleanor evasively. "I am not ready to go anywhere, or do anything, till I feel better."

"I wish you could see Mr. Rhys," said Julia. "He would help you to feel better, I know."

Eleanor was silent, shedding tears quietly.

"Couldn't you come down and see him, Eleanor?"

"Child, how absurdly you talk! Do not speak of Mr. Rhys to me or to any one else—unless you want him sent out of the village."

"Why, who would send him?" said Julia. "But he is going without anybody's sending him. He is going as soon as he gets well, and he says that will be very soon." Julia spoke very sorrowfully. "He is well enough to preach again. He is going to preach at Brompton. I wish I could hear him."

"When?"

"Next Monday evening."

"*Monday* evening?"

"Yes."

"I shall want to purchase things at Brompton Monday," said Eleanor to herself, her heart leaping up light. "I shall take the carriage and go."

"Where will he preach in Brompton, Julia? Is it anything of an extraordinary occasion?"

"No. I don't know. O, he will be in the—I don't know! You know what Mr. Rhys is. He is something—he isn't like what we are."

"Now if I go to the Methodist Chapel at Brompton," thought Eleanor, "it will raise a storm that will either break me on the rocks, or land me on shore. I will do it. This is my very last chance."

She sat before the fire, pondering over her arrangements. Julia nestled up beside her, affectionate but mute, and laid her head caressingly against her sister's

arm. Eleanor felt the action, though she took no notice of it. Both remained still for some little time.

"What would you like, Julia?" her sister began slowly. "What shall I do to please you, before I leave home? What would you choose I should give you?"

"Give *me*? Are you going to give me anything?"

"I would like to please you before I go away—if I knew how. Do you know how I can?"

"O Eleanor! Mr. Rhys wants something very much—If I could give it to him!"

"What is it?"

"He has nothing to write on—nothing but an old portfolio; and that don't keep his pens and ink; and for travelling, you know, when he goes away, if he had a writing case like yours—wouldn't it be nice? O Eleanor, I thought of that the other day, but I had no money. What do you think?"

"Excellent," said Eleanor. "Keep your own counsel, Julia; and you and I will go some day soon, and see what we can find."

"Where will you go? to Brompton?"

"Of course. There is no other place to go to. But keep your own counsel, Julia."

If Julia kept her own counsel, she did not so well know how to keep her sister's; for the very next day, when she was at Mrs. Williams's cottage, the sight of the old portfolio brought up her talk with Eleanor and all that had led to it; and Julia out and spoke.

"Mr. Rhys, I don't believe that Eleanor wants to be married and go to Rythdale Priory."

Mr. Rhys's first movement was to rise and see that the door of communication with the next room was securely shut; then as he sat down to his writing again he said gravely.

"You ought to be very careful how you make such

remarks, Julia. You might without knowing it, do great harm. You are probably very much mistaken."

"I *am* careful, Mr. Rhys. I only said it to you."

"You had better not say it to me. And I hope you will say it to nobody else."

"But I want to speak to somebody," said Julia; "and she was crying in her room yesterday as hard as she could. I do not believe, she wants to go to Rythdale!"

Julia spoke the last words with slow enunciation, like an oracle. Mr. Rhys looked up from his writing and smiled at her a little, though he answered very seriously.

"You ought to remember, Julia, that there might be many things to trouble your sister on leaving home for the last time, without going to any such extravagant supposition as that she does not want to leave it. Miss Eleanor may have other cause for sorrow, quite unconnected with that."

"I know she has, too," said Julia. "I think Eleanor wants to be a Christian."

He looked up again with one of his grave keen glances. "What makes you think it, Julia?"

"She said she wanted to be good, and that she was not ready for anything till she felt better; and I know *that* was what she meant. Do you think Mr. Carlisle is good, Mr. Rhys?"

"I have hardly an acquaintance with Mr. Carlisle. Pray for your sister, Julia, but do not talk about her; and now let me write."

The days rolled on quietly at Ivy Lodge, until Monday came. Eleanor had kept herself in order and given general satisfaction. When Monday came she announced boldly that she was going to give the afternoon of that day to her little sister. It should be spent for Julia's pleasure, and so they two would take the carriage and go to Brompton and be alone. It was a purpose that could not very well be interfered with. Mr. Carlisle

grumbled a little, not ill-humouredly, but withdrew opposition ; and Mrs. Powle made none. However the day turned very disagreeable by afternoon, and she proposed a postponement.

"It is my last chance," said Eleanor. "Julia shall have this afternoon, if I never do it again." So they went.

The little one full of joy and anticipation ; the elder grave, abstracted, unhappy. The day was gloomy and cloudy and windy. Eleanor looked out upon the driving grey clouds, and wondered if she was driving to her fate, at Brompton. She could not help wishing the sun would shine on her fate, whatever it was ; but the chill gloom that enveloped the fields and the roads was all in keeping with the piece of her life she was traversing then. Too much, too much. She could not rouse herself from extreme depression ; and Julia, feeling it, could only remark over and over that it was "a nasty day."

It was better when they got to the town. Brompton was a quaint old town, where comparatively little modernising had come, except in the contents of the shops, and the exteriors of a few buildings. The tower of a very beautiful old church lifted its head above the mass of house-roofs as they drew near the place ; in the town the streets were irregular and narrow and of ancient fashion in great part. Here however the gloom of the day was much lost. What light there was, was broken and shadowed by many a jutting out stone in the old mason-work, many a recess and projecting house-front or roof or doorway ; the broad grey uniformity of dulness that brooded over the open landscape, was not here to be felt. Quaint interest, quaint beauty, the savour of things old and quiet and stable, had a stimulating and a soothing effect too. Eleanor roused up to business, and business gave its usual meed of refreshment and strength. She

and Julia had a good shopping time. It was a burden of love with the little one to see that everything about the proposed purchase was precisely and entirely what it should be; and Eleanor seconded her and gave her her heart's content of pleasure; going from shop to shop, patiently looking for all they wanted, till it was found. Julia's joy was complete; and shone in her face. The face of the other grew dark and anxious. They had got into the carriage to go to another shop for some trifle Eleanor wanted.

"Julia, would you like to stay and hear Mr. Rhys speak to-night?"

"O wouldn't I! But we can't, you know."

"I am going to stay."

"And going to hear him?"

"Yes."

"O Eleanor! Does mamma know?"

"No."

"But she will be frightened, if we are not come home."

"Then you can take the carriage home and tell her; and send the little waggon or my pony for me."

"Couldn't you send one of the men?"

"Yes, and then I should have Mr. Carlisle come after me. No, if I send, you must go."

"Wouldn't he like it?"

"It is no matter whether he would like it or no. I am going to stay. You can do as you please."

"I would like to stay!" said Julia eagerly. "O Eleanor, I want to stay! But mamma would be so frightened. Eleanor do you think it is right?"

"It is right for me," said Eleanor. "It is the only thing I can do. If it displeased all the world, I should stay. You may choose what you will do. If the horses go home, they cannot come back again; the waggon and

old Roger, or my pony, would have to come for me—with Thomas.”

Julia debated, sighed, shewed great anxiety for Eleanor, great difficulty of deciding, but finally concluded even with tears that it would not be *right* for her to stay. The carriage went home with her and her purchases; Thomas, the old coachman, having answered with surprised alacrity to the question, whether he knew where the Wesleyan chapel in Brompton was. He was to come back for Eleanor and be with the waggon there. Eleanor herself went to spend the intermediate time before the hour of service, and take tea, at the house of a little lawyer in the town whom her father employed, and whose wife she knew would be overjoyed at the honour thus done her. It was not perhaps the best choice of a resting-place that Eleanor could have made; for it was a sure and certain fountain head of gossip; but she was in no mood to care for that just now, and desired above all things, not to take shelter in any house where a message or an emissary from the Lodge or the Priory would be likely to find her; nor in one where her proceedings would be gravely looked into. At Mrs. Pinchbeck's hospitable tea-table she was very secure from both. There was nothing but sweetmeats there!

Mrs. Pinchbeck was a lively lady, in a profusion of little fair curls all over her head and a piece of flannel round her throat. She was very voluble, though her voice was very hoarse. Indeed she left nothing untold that there was time to tell. She gave Eleanor an account of all Brompton's doings; of her own; of Mr. Pinchbeck's; and of the doings of young Master Pinchbeck, who was happily in bed, and who she declared, when *not* in bed was too much for her. Meanwhile Mr. Pinchbeck, who was a black-haired, ordinarily somewhat grim looking man, now with his grimness all gilded in smiles, pressed the sweetmeats; and looked his beaming delight at the oc-

casion. Eleanor felt miserably out of place; even Mrs. Pinchbeck's flannel round her throat helped her to question whether she were not altogether wrong and mistaken in her present undertaking. But though she felt miserable, and even trembled with a sort of speculative doubt that came over her, she did not in the least hesitate in her course. Eleanor was not made of that stuff. Certainly she was where she had no business to be, at Mrs. Pinchbeck's tea-table, and Mr. Pinchbeck had no business to be offering her sweetmeats; but it was a miserable necessity of the straits to which she found herself driven. She must go to the Wesleyan chapel that evening; she would, *coute qui coute*. There she dared public opinion; the opinion of the Priory and the Lodge. Here, she confessed said opinion was right.

One good effect of the vocal entertainment to which she was subjected, was that Eleanor herself was not called upon for many words. She listened, and tasted sweetmeats; that was enough, and the Pinchbecks were satisfied. When the time of durance was over, for she was nervously impatient, and the hour of the chapel service was come, Eleanor had not a little difficulty to escape from the offers of attendance and of service which both her host and hostess pressed upon her. If her carriage was to meet her at a little distance, let Mr. Pinchbeck by all means see her into it; and if it was not yet come, at least let her wait where she was while Mr. P. went to make inquiries. Or stay all night! Mrs. Pinchbeck would be delighted. By steady determination Eleanor at last succeeded in getting out of the house and into the street alone. Her heart beat then, fast and hard; it had been giving premonitory starts all the evening. In a very sombre mood of mind, she made her way in the chill wind along the streets, feeling herself a wanderer, every way. The chapel she sought was not far off; lights were blazing there, though the streets

were gloomy. Eleanor made a quiet entrance into the warm house, and sat down; feeling as if the crisis of her fate had come. She did not care now about hiding herself; she went straight up the centre aisle and took a seat about half way in the building, at the end of a pew already filled all but that one place. The house was going to be crowded and a great many people were already there, though it was still very early.

The warmth after the cold streets, and the silence, and the solitude, after being exposed to Mrs. Pinchbeck's tongue and to her observation, made a lull in Eleanor's mind for a moment. Then, with the waywardness of action which thought and feeling often take in unwonted situations, she began to wonder whether it could be right to be there—not only for her, but for anybody. That large, light, plain apartment, looking not half so stately as the saloon of a country house; could that be a proper place for people to meet for divine service? It was better than a barn, still was that a fit *church*? The windows blank and staring with white glass; the woodwork unadorned and merely painted; a little stir of feet coming in and garments rustling, the only sound. She missed the full swell of the organ, which itself might have seemed to clothe even bare boards. Nothing of all that; nothing of what she esteemed dignified, or noble, or sacred; a mere business-looking house, with that simple raised platform and little desk—was Eleanor right to be there? Was anybody else? Poor child, she felt wrong every way, there or not there; but these thoughts tormented her. They tormented her only till Mr. Rhys came in. When she saw him, as it had been that evening in the barn, they quieted instantly. To her mind he was a guaranty for the righteousness of all in which he was concerned; different as it might be from all to which she had been accustomed. Such a guaranty, that Eleanor's mind was almost ready to leap to the other

conclusion, and account wrong whatever the difference put on another side from him. She watched him now, as he went with a quick step to the pulpit, or platform as she called it, and mounting it, kneeled down beside one of the chairs that stood there. Eleanor was accustomed to that action; she had seen clergymen a million of times come into the pulpit, and always kneel; but it was not like this. Always an ample cushion lay ready for the knees that sank upon it; the step was measured; the movement slow; every line was of grace and propriety; the full-robed form bowed reverently, and the face was buried in a white cloud of cambric. Here, a tall figure, attired only in his ordinary dress, went with quick, decided step up to the place; there dropped upon one knee, hiding his face with his hand; without seeming to care where, and certainly without remembering that there was nothing but an ingrain carpet between his knee and the floor. But Eleanor knew what this man was about; and an instant sense of sacredness and awe stole over her, beyond what any organ-peals or richness of Gothic work had ever brought. Then she rejoiced that she was where she was. To be there, could not be wrong.

The house was full and still. The beginning of the service again was the singing; here richer and fuller voiced than it had been in the barn. Somebody else made the prayers; to her sorrow; but then Mr. Rhys rose, and her eye and ear were all for him. She threw back her veil now. She was quite willing that he should see her; quite willing that if he had any message of help or warning for her in the course of his sermon, he should deliver it. He saw her, she knew, immediately. She rather fancied that he saw everybody.

It was to be a missionary sermon, Eleanor had understood; but she thought it was a very strange one. The

text was, "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and to God the things that are God's."

The question was, "What are the Lord's things?"

Mr. Rhys seemed to be only talking to the people, as his bright eye went round the house and he went on to answer this question. Or rather to suggest answers.

Jacob's offering of devotion and gratitude was a tenth part of his possessions. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house; and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

Mr. Rhys announced this. He did not comment upon it at all. He went on to say, that the commandment given by Moses appointed the same offering.

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord. He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it; and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed."

So that it appeared, that the least the Lord would receive as a due offering to him from his people, was a fair and full tenth part of all they possessed. This was required, from those that were only nominally his people. How about those that render to him heart-service?

David's declaration, when laying up provision for the building of the temple, was that *all* was the Lord's. "Who am I, and what is my people, that we should be

able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee. . . O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thy holy name cometh of thine hand, and is all thine own." And God himself, in the fiftieth psalm, claims to be the one sole owner and proprietor, when he says, "Every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills."

But some people may think, that is a sort of natural and providential right, which the Creator exercises over the works of his hands. Come a little closer.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of Hosts."—So it was declared by his prophet Haggai. And by another of his servants, the Lord told the people that their own prospering in the various goods of this world, would be according to their faithfulness in serving him with them.

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse; for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

So that it is not grace nor bounty the Lord receives at our hands in such offerings; it is simply *his own*.

Then it must be considered that those were the times of the old dispensation; of an expensive system of sacrifices and temple worship; with a great body of the priesthood to be maintained and supplied in all their services and private household wants. We live in changed times, under a different rule. What do the Lord's servants owe him now?

The speaker had gone on with the utmost quietness

of manner from one of these instances to another ; using hardly any gestures ; uttering only with slow distinctness and deliberation his sentences one after the other ; his face and eye meanwhile commanding the whole assembly. He went on now with the same quietness, perhaps with a little more deliberateness of accentuation, and an additional spark of fire now and then in his glance.

There was a widow woman once, who threw into the Lord's treasury two mites, which make a farthing ; but it was *all her living*. Again, we read that among the first Christians, "all that believed were together, and had all things common ; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul ; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common."

Were these people extravagant ? They overwent the judgment of the present day. By what rule shall we try them ?

Christ's rule is, "Freely ye have received ; freely give." What have we received ?

Friends, "you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." And the judgment of the old Christian church accorded with this ; for they said,—"The love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Were they extravagant ?

But Christ has given us a closer rule to try the question by. He told his disciples, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, *as I have loved you*."

Does any one ask how that was ? The Lord tells us in the next breath. It was no theoretical feeling. "*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*" "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."

Pausing there in his course, with fire and tenderness breaking out in his face and manner, that gave him a kind of seraphic look, the speaker burst forth into a description of the love of Christ, that before long bowed the heads and hearts of his audience as one man. Sobs and whispers and smothered cries, murmured from all parts of the church; the whole assembly was broken down, while the preacher stood like some heavenly messenger and spoke his Master's name. When he ceased, the suppressed noise of sobs was alone to be heard all over the house. He paused a little, and began again very quietly, but with an added tenderness in his voice.

"He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

He paused again; every one there knew that he was ready to act on the principle he enounced; that he was speaking only of what he had proved; and the heads of the assembly bent lower still.

Does any one ask, What shall we do now? there is no temple to be maintained, nor course of sacrifices to be kept up, nor ceremonial worship, nor Levitical body of priests to be supported and fed. What shall we give our lives and our fortunes to now, if we give them?

"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." Is the gospel dear to you? Is salvation worth having? Think of those who know nothing of it; and then think of Christ's command, "Feed my sheep." They are scattered upon all lands,

the sheep that he died for; who shall gather them in? In China they worship a heap of ashes; in India they adore monsters; in Fiji they live to kill and eat one another; in Africa they sit in the darkness of centuries, till almost the spark of humanity is quenched out. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But "how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!"

"O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain: O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!"

"The Spirit and the bride say, come. And let him that heareth say, come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."——

It was in the midst of the deepest stillness, and in low kept-under tones, that the last words were spoken. And when they ceased, a great hush still remained upon the assembly. It was broken by prayer; sweet, solemn, rapt, such as some there had never heard before; such as some there knew well. When Mr. Rhys had stopped, another began. The whole house was still with tears.

There was one bowed heart there, which had divided subjects of consideration; there was one hidden face which had a double motive for being hid. Eleanor had been absorbed in the entrancing interest of the time, listening with moveless eyes, and borne away from all her own subjects of care and difficulty on the swelling tide of thought and emotion which heaved the whole assem-

bly. Till her own head was bent beneath its power, and her tears sought to be covered from view. She did not move from that attitude ; until, lifting her head near the close of the sermon, as soon as she could get it up in fact, that she might see as much as possible of those wonderful looks she might never see again ; a slight chance turn of her head brought another idea into her mind. A little behind her in the aisle, standing but a pace or two off, was a figure that for one instant made all Eleanor's blood stand still. She could not see it distinctly ; she did not see the face of the person at all ; it was only the merest glimpse of some outlines, the least line of a coat and vision of an arm and hand resting on a pew door. But if that arm and hand did not belong to somebody she knew, in Eleanor's belief it belonged to nobody living. It was not the colour of cloth nor the cut of a dress ; it was the indefinable character of that arm and man's glove, seen with but half an eye. But it made her sure that Mr. Carlisle, in living flesh and blood, stood there, in the Wesleyan chapel though it was. Eleanor cared curiously little about it, after the first start. She felt set free, in the deep high engagement of her thoughts at the time, and the roused and determined state of feeling they had produced. She did not fear Mr. Carlisle. She was quite willing he should have seen her there. It was what she wished, that he should know of her doing. And his neighbourhood in that place did not hinder her full attention and enjoyment of every word that was spoken. It did not check her tears, nor stifle the swelling of her heart under the preaching and under the prayers. Nevertheless Eleanor was conscious of it all the time ; and became conscious too that the service would before very long come to a close ; and then without doubt that quiet glove would have something to do with her. Eleanor did not reason nor stop to think about it. Her heart was full, full, under the

appeals made and the working of conscience with them ; conscience and tenderer feelings, which strove together and yet found no rest ; and this action the sight of Mr. Carlisle rather intensified. Were her head but covered by that helmet of salvation, under which others lived and walked so royally secure,—and she could bid defiance to any disturbing force that could meet her, she thought, in this world.

It was while Eleanor's head was yet bowed, and her heart busy with these struggling feelings, that she heard an invitation given to all people who were not at peace in their hearts and who desired that Christians should pray for them,—to come forward and so signify their wish. Eleanor did not understand what this could mean ; and hearing a stir in the church, she looked up, if perhaps her eyes might give her information. To her surprise she saw that numbers of people were leaving their seats and going forward to what she would have called the chancel rails, where they all knelt down. All these persons, then, were in like condition with her ; unhappy in the consciousness of their wants, and not knowing how to supply them. So many ! And so many willing openly to confess it. Eleanor's heart moved strangely towards them. And then darted into her head an impulse, quick as lightning and almost as startling, that she should join herself to them and go forward as they were doing. Was not her heart mourning for the very same want that they felt ? She had reason enough. No one in that room sought the forgiveness of God and peace with him more earnestly than she, nor with a sorer heart ; nor felt more ignorant how to gain it. Together with that another thought, both of them acting with the swiftness and power of a lightning flash, moved Eleanor. Would it not utterly disgust Mr. Carlisle, if she took this step ? would he wish to have any more to do with her, after she should have gone forward publicly

to ask for prayers in a Wesleyan chapel? It would prove to him at least how far apart they were in all their views and feelings. It would clear her way for her; and the next moment, doing it cunningly that she might not be intercepted, Eleanor Powle slipped out of her seat with a quick movement, just before some one else who was coming up the aisle, and so put that person for that one second of danger between her and the waiting figure whom she knew without looking at. That second was gained, and she went trembling with agitation, yet exultingly, up the aisle and knelt on the low bench where the others were.

Mr. Carlisle and escape from him, had been Eleanor's one thought till she got there. But as her knees sank upon the cushion and her head bowed upon the rails, a flood of other feeling swept over her and Mr. Carlisle was forgotten. The sense of what she was committing herself to—of the open stand she was taking as a sinner, and one who desired to be a forgiven sinner,—overwhelmed her; and her heart's great cry for peace and purity broke forth to the exclusion of everything else.

In the confusion of Eleanor's mind, she did not know in the least what was going on around her in the church. She did not hear if they were praying or singing. She tried to pray for herself; she knew not what others were doing; till she heard some low whispered words near her. That sound startled her into attention; for she knew the accent of one voice that spoke. The other, if one answered, she could not discern; but she found with a start of mingled fear and pleasure that Mr. Rhys was speaking separately with the persons kneeling around the rails. She had only time to clear her voice from tears, before that same low whisper came beside her.

"What is your difficulty?"

"Darkness—confusion—I do not see what way to go."

"Go *no way*," said the whisper impressively, "until

you see clearly. Then do what is right. That is the first point. You know that Christ is the fountain of light?"

"But I see none."

"Seek him trustingly, and obediently; and then look for the light to come, as you would for the dawning after a dark night. It is sure, if you will trust the Lord. His going forth is prepared as the morning." It is sure to come, to all that seek him, trust him, and obey him. Seek him in prayer constantly, and in studying your Bible; and what you find to be your duty, do; and the Lord be with you!"

He passed away from Eleanor; and presently the whole assembly struck up a hymn. It sounded like a sweet shout of melody at the time; but Eleanor could never recall a note of it afterwards. She knew the service was nearly ended, and that in a few minutes she must quit her kneeling, sheltered position, and go out into the world again. She bent her heart to catch all the sweetness of the place and the time; for strange and confused as she felt, there was nevertheless an atmosphere fragrant with peace about both. The hymn came to an end; the congregation were dismissed, and Eleanor perforce turned her face to go down the aisle again.

Her veil was down and she did not look, but she knew without looking just when she reached the spot where Mr. Carlisle stood. He stood there yet; he had only stepped a little aside to let the stream of people go past him; and now as Eleanor came up he assumed his place by her side and put her hand upon his arm as quietly as if he had been waiting there for her by appointment all along. So he led her out to the carriage in waiting for her, helped her into it, and took his place beside her; in silence, but with the utmost gentleness of demeanour. The carriage door was closed, they drove off; Eleanor's evening was over, and she was alone with Mr. Carlisle.

CHAPTER XII.

Mar. "Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of Puritan."

Sir And. "O, if I thought that, I'd beat him like a dog."

Sir Tob. "What, for being a Puritan? thy exquisite reason, dear knight?"

Sir And. "I have no exquisite reason for't, but I have reason good enough."

WHAT was to come now; as in darkness and silence the carriage rolled over the road towards Wiglands? Eleanor did not greatly care. She felt set free; outwardly, by her own daring act of separation; inwardly and more effectually perhaps, by the influence of the evening upon her own mind. In her own settled and matured conclusions, she felt that Mr. Carlisle's power over her was gone. It was a little of an annoyance to have him sitting there; nevertheless Eleanor's mind did not trouble itself much with him. Leaning back in the carriage, she gave herself up to the impressions of the scene she had been through. Her companion was quiet and made no demands upon her attention. She recalled over and over the words, and looks, of the sermon;—the swell of the music—it had been like angel's melody; and the soft words which had been so energetic in their whispered strength as she knelt at the railing. She remembered with fresh wonder and admiration, with what effect the Bible words in the first part of the sermon had come upon the audience through that extreme quietness of voice and delivery; and then with what sudden fire and life, as if he had become another man, the speaker had burst out to speak of his Master; and how it had swayed and bent the assembly. It was an entirely new view of Mr. Rhys, and Eleanor could not forget it. In general, as she had always seen him, though perfectly at

ease in his manners he was very simple and undemonstrative. She had not guessed there was such might in him. It awed her; it delighted her. To live such a life and to do such work as that man lived for,—that was living indeed! That was noble, high, pure; unlike and O how far above all the manner of lives Eleanor had ever seen before. And such, in so far as the little may resemble the great,—such at least so far as in her sphere and abilities and sadly inferior moral qualities it might lie—such in aim and direction at least, her own life should be. What had she to do with Mr. Carlisle?

Eleanor never spoke to him during the long drive, forgetting as far as she could, though a little uneasiness grew upon her by degrees, that he was even present. And he did not speak to her, nor remind her of his presence otherwise than by pulling up the glass on her side when the wind blew in too chill. It was *his* carriage they were in, Eleanor then perceived; and she wanted to ask a question; but on the whole concluded it safe to be still; according to the proverb, *Let sleeping dogs lie*. One other time he drew her shawl round her which she had let slip off.

Mr. Carlisle was possessed of large self-control and had great perfection of tact; and he never shewed either more consummately than this night. What he underwent while standing in the aisle of the Chapel, was known to himself; he made it known to nobody else. He was certainly silent during the drive; that shewed him displeased; but every movement was calm as ordinary; his care of Eleanor was the same, in its mixture of gentle observance and authority. He had laid down neither. Eleanor could have wished he had been unable to keep one or the other. Would he keep her too, and everything else that he chose? Nothing is more subduing in its effect upon others, than evident power of self-command. Eleanor could not help feeling it, as she

stepped out of the carriage at home, and was led into the house.

"Will you give me a few minutes, when you have changed your dress?" her conductor asked.

It must come, thought Eleanor, and as well now as ever; and she assented. Mr. Carlisle led her in. Nobody was in waiting but Mrs. Powle; and she waited with devouring anxiety. The Squire and Julia she had carefully disposed of in good time.

"Eleanor is tired, Mrs. Powle, and so am I," said Mr. Carlisle. "Will you let us have some supper here, by this fire—and I think Eleanor had better have a cup of tea; as I cannot find out the wine that she likes." And as Eleanor moved away, he added,—“And let me beg you not to keep yourself from your rest any longer—I will take care of my charge; at least I will try.”

Devoutly hoping that he might succeed to his wishes, and not daring to shew the anxiety he did not move to gratify, Mrs. Powle took the hint of his gentle dismissal; ordered the supper and withdrew. Meanwhile Eleanor went to her room, relieved at the quiet entrance that had been secured her, where she had looked for a storm; and a little puzzled what to make of Mr. Carlisle. A little afraid too, if the truth must be known; but she fell back upon Mr. Rhys's words of counsel—"Go *no* way, till you see clearly; and then do what is right." She took off her bonnet and smoothed her hair; and was about to go down, when she was checked by the remembrance of Mr. Carlisle's words, "when you have changed your dress." She told herself it was absurd why should she change her dress for that half hour that she would be up; why should she mind that word of intimation; she called herself a fool for it; nevertheless, while saying these things Eleanor did the very thing she scouted at. She put off her riding dress, which the streets of Brompton and the Chapel aisles had seen that

day, and changed it for a light grey drapery that fell about her in very graceful folds. She looked very lovely when she reëntered the drawing-room; the medium tint set off her own rich colours, and the laces at throat and wrist were just simple enough to aid the whole effect. Mr. Carlisle was a judge of dress; he was standing before the fire and surveyed her as she came in; and as Eleanor's foot faltered half way in the room, he came forward, took both her hands and led her to the fire, where he set her in a great chair by the supper-table; and then before he let her go, did what he had not meant to do; gave a very frank kiss to the lips that were so rich and pure and so near him. Eleanor's heart had sunk a little at perceiving that her mother was not in the room; and this action was far from reassuring. She would rather Mr. Carlisle had been angry. He was far more difficult to meet in this mood.

Meanwhile Mr. Carlisle brought her chair into more convenient neighbourhood to the table, and set a plate before her on which he went on to place whatever he thought fit. "I know what you are wanting," he said;—"but you shall not have a cup of tea unless I see you eat." And Eleanor eat, feeling the need of it, and the necessity of doing something likewise.

Mr. Carlisle poured himself out a glass of wine and slowly drank it, watching her. Midway set it down; and himself made and poured out and sugared and creamed a cup of tea which he set beside Eleanor. It was done in the nicest way possible, with a manner that any woman would like to have wait on her. Eleanor tasted, and could not hold her tongue any more.

"I did not know this was one of your accomplishments,"—she said without raising her eyes.

"For you"—said Mr. Carlisle. "I believe it will never be exercised for anybody else."

He slowly finished his wine while he watched her.

He eat nothing himself, though Eleanor asked him, till she turned from her plate, and did what she had not done till then but could no longer withhold ; let her eyes meet his.

“Now,” said he throwing himself into an opposite chair,—“I will take a cup of tea, if you will make it for me.”

Eleanor blushed—what made her?—as she set about performing this office. The tea was cold ; she had to make fresh, and wait till it was ready ; and she stood by the table watching and preparing it, while Mr. Carlisle sat in his chair observing her. Eleanor’s cheeks flushed more and more. There was something about this little piece of domesticity, and her becoming the servitor in her turn, that brought up things she did not wish to think of. But her neighbour liked what she did not like, for he sat as quiet as a mouse until Eleanor’s trembling hand offered him the cup. She had to take a step or two for it, but he never stirred to abridge them. Eleanor sat down again, and Mr. Carlisle sipped his tea with an appearance of gratification.

“That is a young man of uncommon abilities”—he remarked composedly,—“whom we heard this evening. Do you know who he is, Eleanor?”

Eleanor felt as if the sky was falling. “It is Mr. Rhys—Alfred’s old tutor—” she answered, in a voice which she felt was dry and embarrassed to the quick ears that heard her. “You have seen him.”

“I thought I had, somewhere. But that man has power. It is a pity he could not be induced to come into the Church—he would draw better houses than Dr. Cairnes. Do you think we could win him over, Eleanor?”

“I believe—I have heard”—said Eleanor, “that he is going away from England. He is going a missionary to

some very far away region." She was quite willing Mr. Carlisle should understand this.

"Just as well," he answered. "If he would not come into his right place, such a man would only work to draw other persons out of theirs. There is a sort of popular power of speech which wins with the common and uneducated mind. I saw it won upon you, Nellie; how was that?"

The light tone, in which a smile seemed but half concealed, disconcerted Eleanor. She was not ashamed, she thought she was not, but she did not know how to answer."

"You are a little *tête montée*," he said. "If I had been a little nearer to you to-night, I would have saved you from taking one step; but I did not fancy that you could be so suddenly wrought upon. Pray how happened you to be in that place to-night?"

"I told you," said Eleanor after some hesitation, "that I had an unsatisfied wish of heart which made me uneasy—and you would not believe me."

"If you knew how this man could speak, I do not wonder at your wanting to hear him. Did you ever hear him before?"

"Yes," said Eleanor, feeling that she was getting in a wrong position before her questioner. "I have heard him once—I wanted to hear him again."

"Why did you not tell me your wish, that you might gratify it safely, Eleanor?"

"I supposed—if I did—I should lose my chance of gratifying it at all."

"You are a real *tête-montée*," he said, standing now before her and taking hold lightly and caressingly of Eleanor's chin as he spoke. "It was well nobody saw you to-night but me. Does my little wife think she can safely gratify many of her wishes without her husband's knowledge?"

Eleanor coloured brightly and drew herself back. "That is the very thing," she said; "now you are coming to the point. I told you I had wishes with which yours would not agree, and it was better for you to know it before it was too late."

"Too late for what?"

"To remedy a great evil."

"There is generally a remedy for everything," said Mr. Carlisle coolly; "and this sort of imaginative fervour which is upon you is sure to find a cold bath of its own in good time. My purpose is simply in future, whenever you wish to hear another specimen of the kind of oratory we have listened to this evening, to be with you that I may protect you."

"Protect me from what?"

"From going too far, further than you know, in your present *exaltée* state. The Lady of Rythdale must not do anything unworthy of herself, or of me."

"What do you mean, Mr. Carlisle?" Eleanor exclaimed with burning cheeks. But he stood before her quite cool, his arms folded, looking down at her.

"Do you wish me to speak?"

"Certainly! I do."

"I will tell you then. It would not accord with my wishes to have my wife grant whispered consultations in public to any man; especially a young man and one of insinuating talents, which this one well may be. I could have shot that man, as he was talking to you to-night, Eleanor."

Eleanor put up her hands to her face to hide its colour for a moment. Shame and anger and confusion struggled together. *Had* she done anything unworthy of her? Others did the same, but they belonged to a different class of persons; had she been where Eleanor Powle, or even Eleanor Carlisle, would be out of place? And then there was the contrasted consciousness, how

very pleasant and precious that whispered "consultation" had been to her. Mr. Carlisle stooped and took away her hands from her face, holding them in his own.

"Eleanor—had that young man anything to do with those unmanageable wishes you expressed to me?"

"So far as his words and example set me upon thinking," said Eleanor. "But there was nothing in what was said to-night that all the world might not hear." She rose, for it was an uncomfortable position in which her hands were held.

"All the world did not hear it, you will remember. Eleanor, you are honest, and I am jealous—will you tell me that you have no regard for this young man more than my wife ought to have?"

"Mr. Carlisle, I have never asked myself the question!" exclaimed Eleanor with indignant eyes. "If you doubt me, you cannot wish to have anything more to do with me."

"Call me Macintosh," said he drawing her within his arm.

Eleanor would not. She would have freed herself, but she could not without exerting too much force. She stood silent.

"Will you tell me," he said in a gentle changed tone, "what words did pass between you and that young man,—that you said all the world might hear?"

Eleanor hesitated. Her head was almost on Mr. Carlisle's shoulder; his lips were almost at her downcast brow; the brilliant hazel eyes were looking with their powerful light into her face. And she was his affianced wife. Was Eleanor free? Had this man, who loved her, no rights? Along with all other feelings, a keen sense of self-reproach stole in again.

"Macintosh," she said drooping, "it was entirely about religious matters—that you would laugh at, but would not understand."

"Indulge me—and try me—" he said pressing his lips first on Eleanor's cheek and then on her mouth. She answered in the same tone as before, drooping in his arms as a weary child.

"He asked me—as I suppose he asked others—what the difficulties in my mind were,—religious difficulties; and I told him my mind was in confusion and I did not see clearly before me. He advised me to do nothing in the dark, but when I saw duty clear, then to do it. That was what passed."

"What did all these difficulties and rules of action refer to?"

"Everything, I suppose," said Eleanor drooping more and more inwardly.

"And you do not see, my love, what all this tended to?"

"I do not see what you mean."

"This is artful proselytism, Eleanor. In your brave honesty, in your beautiful enthusiasm, you did not know that the purpose of all this has been, to make a Methodist of Eleanor Powle, and as a necessary preliminary or condition, to break off her promised marriage with me. If that fellow had succeeded, he should have been made to feel my indignation—as it is, I shall let him go."

"You are entirely mistaken,—" began Eleanor.

"Am I? Have you not been led to doubt whether you could live a right life, and live it with me?"

"But would you be willing in everything to let me do as I think right?"

"Would I let you? You shall do what you will, my darling, except go to whispering conventicles. Assuredly I will not let you do that. But when you tell me seriously that you think a thing is wrong, I will never put my will in the way of your conscience. Did you think me a Mahometan? Hey?"

"No—but—"

"But what?"

Eleanor only sighed.

"I think I have something to forgive to-night, Eleanor,—but it is easy to forgive you." And wrapping both arms round her now, he pressed on brow and lip and cheek kisses that were abundantly reconciled.

"My presence just saved you to night. Eleanor—will you promise not to be naughty any more?—Eleanor?—"

"I will try," burst out Eleanor,—“O I will try to do what is right! I will try to do what is right!”

And in bitter uncertainty what that might be, she gave way under the strain of so many feelings, and the sense of being conquered which oppressed her, and burst into tears. Still held fast, the only hiding-place for her eyes was Mr. Carlisle's breast, and they flowed there bitterly though restrained as much as possible. *He* hardly wished to restrain them; he would have been willing to stand all night with that soft brown head resting like a child's on him. Nevertheless he called her to order with words and kisses.

"Do you know, it is late," he said,—“and you are tired. I must send you off. Eleanor! look up. Look up and kiss me.”

Eleanor overcame the passion of tears as soon as possible, yet not till a few minutes had passed; and looked up; at least raised her head from its resting-place. Mr. Carlisle whispered, “Kiss me!”

How could Eleanor refuse? what could she do? though it was sealing allegiance over again. She was utterly humbled and conquered. But there was a touch of pride to be satisfied first. Laying one hand on Mr. Carlisle's shoulder, so as to push herself a little back where she could look him in the face, with eyes glittering yet, she confronted him; and asked, “Do you doubt me now?”

Holding her in both arms, at just that distance, he looked down at her, a smile as calm as brilliant playing all over his face, which spoke perfect content as well as secure possession. But the trust in his eyes was as clear.

"No more than I doubt myself," he answered.

Pride was laid asleep; and yielding to what seemed her fate, Eleanor gave the required token of fealty—or subjugation—for so it seemed to her. Standing quite still, with bent head and moveless attitude, the slightest smile in the world upon the lips, Mr. Carlisle's whole air said silently that it was not enough. Eleanor yielded again, and once more touched her lips to those of her master. He let her go then; lit her candle and attended her to the foot of the staircase and dismissed her with all care.

"I wonder if he is going to stay here himself to-night, and meet me in the morning," thought Eleanor as she went up the stairs. "It does not matter—I will go to sleep and forget everything, for a while."

Would she? There was no sleep for Eleanor that night, and she knew it as soon as she reached her room. She set down her candle and then herself in blank despair.

What had she done? Nothing at all. The stand she had meant to take at the beginning of the evening, she had been unable even to set foot upon. The bold step by which she had thought to set herself free from Mr. Carlisle, had only laid her more completely at his feet. Eleanor got up and walked the room in agony.

What had she done? She was this man's promised wife; she had made her own bonds; it was her own doing; he had a right to her, he had claims upon her, he had given his affection to her. Had *she* any rights now, inconsistent with his? Must she not fulfil this marriage? And yet, could she do so, feeling as she did? would *that* be right? For no sooner was Eleanor alone than the subdued cry of her heart broke out again, that it could not be. And that cry grew desperate. Yet

this evening's opportunity had all come to nothing. Worse than nothing, for it had laid an additional difficulty in her way. By her window, looking out into the dark night, Eleanor stopped and looked at this difficulty. She drew from its lurking-place in the darkness of her heart the question Mr. Carlisle had suggested, and confronted it steadily.

Had "that young man," the preacher of this evening, Eleanor's really best friend, had he anything to do with her "unmanageable wishes?" *Had* she any regard for him that influenced her mind in this struggle—or that raised the struggle? With fiercely throbbing heart Eleanor looked this question for the first time in the face. "No!" she said to herself,—“no! I have not. I have no such regard for him. How debasing to have such a doubt raised! But—I *might* have—I think that is true—if circumstances put me in the way of it. And I think, seeing him and knowing his superior beauty of character—how superior!—has wakened me up to the consciousness of what I do like, and what I like best; and made me conscious too that I do not love Mr. Carlisle as well as I ought, to be his wife—not as he loves me. *That* I see now,—too late. Oh, mother, mother! why were you in such a hurry to seal this marriage—when I told you, I told you, I was not ready. But then I did not know any more than that. And now I cannot marry him—and yet I shall—and I do not know but I ought. And yet I cannot.”

Eleanor walked her floor or stood by her window that live-long night. It was a night of great agony and distracted searching for relief. Where should relief come from? To tell Mr. Carlisle frankly that she did not bear the right kind of love towards him, she knew would be the vainest of expedients. "He can make me do anything—he would say he can make me love him; and so, perhaps, he could—I believe he would—if I had not

seen this other man." And then Eleanor drew the contrast between one person and the other ; the high, pure, spiritual nobleness of the one, and the social and personal graces and intellectual power of the other, all used for selfish ends. It was a very unprofitable speculation for Eleanor ; it left her further than ever from the conclusion, and distressed her bitterly. From her mother she knew sadly there was no help to be had. No consideration, of duty or pleasure, would outweigh with her the loss of a splendid alliance and the scandal of breaking off the preparations for it. The Sphinx would not look out more calmly over the desert waste of all things, than Mrs. Powle's fair face would overview a moral desolation more hopeless and more cheerless, if but the pyramid of her ambition were firmly planted there. And Eleanor's worst trouble after all was her doubt about duty. If Mr. Carlisle had not loved her—but he did love her truly and tenderly, and she, however misled, had given him permission. Could she now withdraw it ? Could she do anything but, at whatever risk, go on and meet the obligations she had brought upon herself ? Nature cried out strongly that it must not be ; but conscience and remorse, aided by circumstances, withstood nature, and said it must be no other way. Eleanor must marry Mr. Carlisle and be as good to him as she could. And Eleanor's whole soul began to rise up stronger and stronger in protest against it, and cry that she never would marry him.

The weary long night seemed but as one thought of pain ; and when the morning broke, Eleanor felt that she had grown old.

CHAPTER XIII.

"We will have rings, and things, and fine array
And kiss me, Kate, we will be married o' Sunday."

ELEANOR was too sick to go down even to a late breakfast; and a raging headache kept off any inquiries or remonstrances that Mrs. Powle might have made to her if she had been well. Later in the day her little sister Julia came dancing in.

"Aren't you going to get up, Eleanor? What's the matter? I am going to open your window. You are all shut up here."

Back went the curtain and up went the window; a breath of fresh mild air came sweetly in, and Julia danced back to the bedside. There suddenly sobered herself.

"Eleanor, aren't you better? Can't you get up? It is so nice to-day."

Julia's fresh, innocent, gay manner, the very light play of her waving hair, not lighter than the childlike heart, were almost too much for her sister. They made Eleanor's heart ache.

"Where is everybody?"

"Nowhere," said Julia. "I am all the house. Mr Carlisle went home after breakfast; and mamma and Alfred are gone in the carriage to Brompton; and papa is out somewhere. Are you better, Nellie?"

"I shall never be better!" said Eleanor. She turned and hid her face.

"Oh why, Eleanor? What makes you say that? What is the matter? I knew yesterday you were not happy."

"I am never going to be happy. I hope you will."

"I *am* happy," said Julia. "And you will be. I told Mr. Rhys you were not happy,—and he said you would be by and by."

"Julia!" said Eleanor raising herself on her elbow and with a colour spreading all over her face,—“don't talk to Mr. Rhys about me or my concerns! What makes you do such a thing?”

"Why I haven't anybody else to talk to," said Julia. "Give me your foot, and I'll put on your stocking. Come! you are going to get up. And besides, he thinks a great deal of you, and we pray for you every day."

"Who?"

"He does, and I. Come!—give me your foot."

"*He, and you!*" said Eleanor.

"Yes," said Julia looking up. "We pray for you every day. What's the matter, Eleanor?"

Her hand was laid sorrowfully and tenderly on the shoulder of the sister whose face was again hid from her. But at the touch Eleanor raised her head.

"You seem a different child, Julia, from what you used to be."

"What's the matter, Nellie?"—very tenderly.

"I wish I was different too," said Eleanor, springing out of bed; "and I want time to go away by myself and think it out and battle it out, until I know just what is right and am ready to do it; and instead of that, mamma and Mr. Carlisle have arranged——"

"Stop and sit down," said Julia taking hold of her; "you look white and black and all colours. Wait and rest, Eleanor."

But Eleanor would not till she had tried the refreshment of cold water, and had put her beautiful hair in order; then she sat down in her dressing-gown. Julia had watched and now stood anxiously beside her.

"Oh what is the matter, Eleanor?"

"I don't know, Julia. I do not know what is right."

"Have you asked God to make you know?"

"No," said Eleanor, drooping.

"That's what Mr. Rhys always does, so he is never troubled. I will tell you what he says—he says, 'What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.' Then he feels safe, you know."

"It is a pity you cannot go to the South Seas with Mr. Rhys. You talk of nothing but him."

"I would like to go with him," said Julia simply.

"But I have learned how to feel safe too, for I trust in Jesus too; and I know he will teach me right. So he will teach you, Eleanor."

Eleanor bowed her head on her hands, and wept and wept; but while she wept, resolutions were taking form in her mind. Mr. Rhys's words came back to her—"Go no way, till you see clear." The renewed thought of that helmet of salvation, and of that heavenly guidance, that she needed and longed for; so supremely, so much above everything else; gradually gained her strength to resolve that she would have them at all hazards. She must have time to seek them and to be sure of her duty; and then, she would do it. She determined she would not see Mr. Carlisle; he would conquer her; she would manage the matter with her mother. Eleanor thought it all over, the opposition and the difficulties, and resolved with the strength of desperation. She had grown old during this night. She had a long interval of quiet before her mother came.

"Well, Eleanor! in your dressing-gown yet, and only your hair done! When do you expect to be down stairs? Somebody will be here presently and expect to see you."

"Somebody will be disappointed. My head is splitting, mamma."

"I should think it would! after yesterday's gambade, What did Mr. Carlisle say to you, I should like to know? I thought you would have offended him past forgiveness. I was relieved beyond all expression this morning, at breakfast, when I saw all was right again. But he told me not to scold you, and I will not talk about it."

"Mamma, if you will take off your bonnet and sit down—I will talk to you about something else."

Mrs. Powle sat down, took her bonnet in her lap, and pushed her fair curls into place. They were rarely out of place; it was more a form than anything else. Yet Mrs. Powle looked anxious; and her anxiety found natural expression as she said,

"I wish the twenty-first was to-morrow!"

"That is the thing I wish to speak about. Mamma, that day, the day for my marriage, has been appointed too early—I feel hurried, and not ready. I want to study my own mind and know exactly what I am doing. I am going to ask you to have it put off."

"Put it off!—" cried Mrs. Powle. Language contained no other words of equal importance to be spoken in the same breath with those three.

"Yes. I want it put off."

"Till when, if you please. It might as well be doomsday at once."

"Till doomsday, if necessary; but I want it put off. I do not stipulate for so long a time as that," said Elea nor putting her hand to her head.

"What day would you name, in lieu of the twenty-first? I should like to know how far your arrangements extend."

"I want time to collect my thoughts and be ready for so great a change. I want time to study, and think,—and pray. I shall ask for at least three months."

"Three months! Till April! And pray, what has

ailed your ladyship not to study and think and pray if you like, all these months that have passed?"

"I have no chance. My time is all taken up. I can do nothing, but go round in a whirl—till my head is spinning."

"And what will you do in these three months to come? I should like to know all you propose."

"I propose to go away from home—somewhere that I can be quiet and alone. Then, if there is no reason against it, I promise to come back and fulfil my engagement with Mr. Carlisle."

"Eleanor, you are a fool!" burst out her mother. "You are a fool, or worse. How dare you talk such stuff to me? I can hardly believe you serious, only for your face. Do you suppose I will think for one moment of such a thing as putting off the day?—and if I would, have you any idea that Mr. Carlisle would give *his* assent to it?"

"If you do not, both you and he, I shall break off the marriage altogether."

"I dare you to do it!" said Mrs. Powle. "With the wedding-dresses made, and almost the wedding cake—every preparation—the whole world to be scandalized and talking at any delay—your family disgraced, and yourself ruined for ever;—and Mr. Carlisle—Eleanor, I think you are crazy! only you sit there with such a wicked face!—"

"It is in danger of being wicked," said Eleanor, drawing both her hands over it;—"for I warn you, mother, I am determined. I have been hurried on. I will be hurried no further. I will take poison, before I will be married on the twenty-first! As well lose my soul one way as another. You and Mr. Carlisle must give me time—or I will break the match altogether. I will bear the consequences."

"Have you spoken to him of this precious arrangement?"

"No," said Eleanor, her manner failing a little.—
"You must do it."

"I thought so!" said Mrs. Powle. "He knows how to manage you, my young lady! which I never did yet. I will just bring him up here to you—and you will be like a whipped child in three minutes. O you know it. I see it in your face. Eleanor, I am ashamed of you!"

"I will not see him up here, mamma."

"You will, if you cannot help it. Eleanor I wouldn't try him too far. He is very fond of you—but he will be your husband in a few days; and he is not the sort of man I should like to have displeased with me, if I were you."

"He never will, mamma, unless he waits three months for it."

"Now I will tell you one thing," said Mrs. Powle rising in great anger—"I can put down my foot too. I am tired of this sort of thing, and I cannot manage you, and I will give you over to one who can. To-day is Tuesday—the twenty-first is exactly one fortnight off. Well my young lady, *I* will change the day. Next Monday I will give you to Mr. Carlisle, and he will be your master; and I fancy he is not at all afraid to assume the responsibility. He may take you to as quiet a place as he likes; and you may think at your leisure, and more properly than in the way you propose. So, Eleanor, you shall be married o' Monday."

Mrs. Powle flourished out with her bonnet in her hand. Eleanor's first movement was to go after her and turn the key in the door securely; then she threw up the window and flung herself on her face on the bed. Her mother was quite capable of doing as she had said, for her fair features covered a not very tender heart. Mr. Carlisle would second her, no doubt, all the more eagerly

for the last night's adventures. Could Eleanor make head against those two? And between Tuesday and Monday was very little time to mature plans or organize resistance. Her head felt like splitting now indeed, for very confusion.

"Eleanor," said Julia's voice gravely and anxiously, "you will take cold—mayn't I shut the window?"

"There's no danger. I am in a fever."

"Is your head no better?"

"I hardly think I have a head. There is nothing there but pain and snapping."

"Poor Eleanor!" said her little sister, standing by the bedside like a powerless guardian angel. "Mr. Carlisle isn't good, if he wouldn't do what you want him."

"Do not open the door, Julia, if anybody knocks!"

"No. But wouldn't he, Eleanor, if you were to ask him?"

Eleanor made no answer. She knew, it needed but a glance at last night's experience to remind her, that she could not make head against Mr. Carlisle. If *he* came to talk to her about her proposed scheme, all was lost. Suddenly Eleanor threw herself off the bed and began to dress with precipitation.

"Why are you better, Eleanor?" Julia asked in surprise.

"No—but I must go down stairs. Bring me my blue dress, Julia;—and go and get me some geranium leaves—some strong-scented ones. Here—go down the back way."

No matter for head-splitting. Eleanor dressed in haste, but with delicate care; in a dress that Mr. Carlisle liked. Its colour suited her, and its simple make shewed her beauty; better than a more furbelowed one. The aromatic geranium leaves were for her head—but with them Julia had brought some of the brilliant red flowers; and fastened on her breast where Eleanor could

feel their sweetness, they at the same time made a bright touch of adornment to her figure. She was obliged to sit down then and rest; but as soon as she could she went to the drawing-room.

There were as usual several people there besides the family; Dr. Cairnes and Miss Broadus and her sister making part. Entering with a slow quiet movement, most unlike the real hurry of her spirits, Eleanor had time to observe how different persons were placed and to choose her own plan of action. It was to slip silently into a large chair which stood empty at Mr. Carlisle's side, and which favoured her by presenting itself as the nearest attackable point of the circle. It was done with such graceful noiselessness that many did not at the moment notice her; but two persons were quick of vision where she was concerned. Mr. Carlisle bent over her with delight, and though Mrs. Powle's fair curls were not disturbed by any sudden motion of her head, her grey eyes dilated with wonder and curiosity as she listened to a story of Miss Broadus which was fitted to excite neither. Eleanor was beyond her, but she concluded that Mr. Carlisle held the key of this extraordinary docility.

Eleanor sat very quiet in her chair, looking lovely, and by degrees using up her geranium leaves; with which she went through a variety of manipulations. They were picked to pieces and rubbed to pieces and their aromatic essence crushed out of them with every kind of formality. Mr. Carlisle finding that she had a head ache did not trouble her to talk, and relieved her from attention; any further than his arm or hand mounting guard on her chair constantly gave. For it gathered the broken geranium leaves out of her way and picked them up from her feet. At last his hand came after hers and made it a prisoner.

"You have a mood of destructiveness upon you,"

said he. "See there—you have done to death all the green of your bouquet."

"The geranium leaves are good to my head," said Eleanor. "I want some more. Will you go with me to get them?"

It gave her heart a shiver, the hold in which her hand lay. Though taken in play, the hold was so very cool and firm. Her hand lay there still, for Mr. Carlisle sat a moment after she spoke, looking at her.

"I will go with you—wherever you please," he said; and putting Eleanor's hand on his arm they walked off towards the conservatory. This was at some distance, and opened out of the breakfast room. It was no great matter of a conservatory, only pretty and sweet. Eleanor began slowly to pull geranium leaves.

"You are suffering, Eleanor,"—said Mr. Carlisle.

"I do not think of it—you need not. Macintosh, I want to ask a favour of you."

She turned to him, without raising her eyes, but made the appeal of her whole pretty presence. He drew his arm round her and suspended the business of geranium leaves.

"What is it, my darling?"

"You know," said Eleanor, "that when the twenty-first of December was fixed upon—for what you wished—it was a more hurried day than I would have chosen; if the choice had been left to me. I wanted more time—but you and my mother said that day, and I agreed to it. Now, my mother has taken a notion to make it still earlier—she wants to cut off a whole week from me—she wants to make it next Monday. Don't join with her! Let me have all the time that was promised me!"

Eleanor could not raise her eyes; she enforced her appeal by laying her hand on Mr. Carlisle's arm. He drew her close up to him, held her fast, stooped his head to hers.

"What for, Eleanor? Laces and plums can be ready as well Monday as Monday s'ennight."

"For myself, Macintosh."

"Don't you think of me?"

"No!" said Eleanor, "I do not. It is quite enough that you should have your wish after Monday s'ennight—I ought to have it before."

He laughed and kissed her. He always liked any shew of spirit in Eleanor.

"My darling, what difference does a week make?"

"Just the difference of a week; and more than that in my mind. I want it. Grant me this favour, Mackintosh! I ask it of you."

Mr. Carlisle seemed to find it amazingly pleasant to have Eleanor suing to him for favours; for he answered her as much with caresses as with words; both very satisfied.

"You try me beyond my strength, Eleanor. Your mother offers to give you to me Monday—Do you think I care so little about this possession that I will not take it a week earlier than I had hoped to have it?"

"But the week is mine—it is due to me, Macintosh. No one has a right to take it from me. You may have the power; and I ask you not to use it."

"Eleanor, you break my heart. My love, do you know that I have business calling for me in London?—it is calling for me now, urgently. I must carry you up to London at once; and this week that you plead for, I do not know how to give. If I *can* go the fifteenth instead of the twenty-second, I must. Do you see, Nellie?" he asked very tenderly.

Eleanor hardly saw anything; the world and all in it seemed to be in a swimming state before her eyes. Only Mr. Carlisle's "can's" and "must's" obeyed him, she felt sure, as well as everything else. She felt stunned. Holding her on one arm, Mr. Carlisle began to pluck

flowers and myrtle sprays and to adorn her hair with them. It was a labour of love; he liked the business and played with it. The beautiful brown masses of hair invited and rewarded attention.

"Then my mother has spoken to you?" she said at length.

"Yes,"—he said, arranging a spray of heath with white blossoms. "Do you blame me?" Eleanor sought to withdraw herself from his arm, but he detained her.

"Where are you going?"

"Up stairs—to my room."

"Do you forgive me, Eleanor?" he said, looking down at her.

"No,—I think I do not."

He laughed a little, kissing her downcast face.

"I will make you my wife, Monday, Eleanor; and after that I will make you forgive me; and then—my wife shall ask me nothing that she shall not have."

Keeping her on his arm, he led her slowly from the conservatory, through the rooms, and up the staircase, to the door of her own apartment.

Eleanor tore out the flowers as soon as she was alone, locked her door, meaning at least not to see her mother that night; took off her dress and lay down. Refuge failed her. She was in despair. What could she arrange between Tuesday night and Monday? Short of taking poison, or absconding privately from the house, and so disgracing both herself and her family. Yet Eleanor was in such desperation of feeling that both those expedients occurred to her in the course of the night, although only to be rejected. Worn-out nature must have some rest however; and towards morning she slept.

It was late when she opened her eyes. They fell first upon Julia, standing at her bedside.

"Are you awake, Eleanor?"

"Yes. I wish I could sleep on."

"There's news."

"News! What sort of news?" said Eleanor, feeling that none concerned her.

"It's bad news—and yet—for you—it is good news."

"What is it, child? Speak."

"Lady Rythdale—she is dead."

Eleanor raised herself on her elbow and stared at Julia. "How do you know? how do you know?" she said.

"A messenger came to tell us—she died last night. The man came a good while ago, but—"

She never finished her sentence; for Eleanor threw herself out of bed, exclaiming, "I am saved! I am saved!"—and went down on her knees by the bedside. It was hardly to pray, for Eleanor scarce knew how to pray; yet that position seemed an embodiment of thanks she could not speak. She kept it a good while, still as death. Julia stood motionless, looking on.

"Don't think me wicked," said Eleanor getting up at last. "I am not glad of anything but my own deliverance. Oh, Julia!—"

"Poor Eleanor!" said her little sister wonderingly. "Then you don't want to be married and go to Rythdale?"

"Not Monday!" said Eleanor. "And now I shall not. It is not possible that a wedding and a funeral should be in one house on the same day. I know which they would put off if they could, but they have got to put off the other. O Julia, it is the saving of me!"

She caught the little one in her arms and sat with her so, their two heads nestling together, Eleanor's bowed upon her sister's neck.

"But Eleanor, will you not marry Mr. Carlisle after all?"

"I cannot,—for a good while, child."

"But then?"

"I shall *never* be married in a hurry. I have got breathing time—time to think. And I'll use it."

"And, O Eleanor ! won't you do something else ?"

"What ?"

"Won't you be a servant of the Lord ?"

"I will—if I can find out how," Eleanor answered low.

It poured with rain. Eleanor liked it that day, though generally she was no lover of weather that kept her within. A spell of soothing had descended upon her. Life was no longer the rough thing it had seemed to her yesterday. A constant drop of thankfulness at her heart kept all her words and manner sweet with its secret perfume. Eleanor's temper was always as sound as a nut ; but there was now a peculiar grace of gentleness and softness in all she did. She was able to go faultlessly through all the scenes of that day and the following days ; through her mother's open discomfiture and half expressed disappointment, and Mr. Carlisle's suppressed impatience. His manner was perfect too ; his impatience was by no word or look made known ; grave, quiet, self-contained, he only allowed his affectionateness towards Eleanor to have full play, and the expression of that was changed. He did not appeal to her for sympathy which perhaps he had a secret knowledge she could not give ; but with lofty good breeding and his invariable tact he took it for granted. Eleanor's part was an easy one through those days which passed before Mr. Carlisle's going up to London. He went immediately after the funeral.

It was understood, however, between him and Mrs. Powle, that the marriage should be delayed no longer than till some time in the spring. Then, Mr. Carlisle declared, he should carry into effect his original plan of going abroad, and take Eleanor with him. Eleanor

heard them talk, and kept silence ; letting them arrange it their own way.

“ For a little while, Eleanor ! ” were the parting words which Mr. Carlisle’s lips left upon hers. And Eleanor turned then to look at what was before her.

CHAPTER XIV.

"The earth has lost its power to drag me downward ;
Its spell is gone ;
My course is now right upward, and right onward,
To yonder throne."

SHE had three months of quiet time. Not more ; and they would quickly speed away. What she had to do, she could not do too soon. Eleanor knew it. The soothed feeling of the first few days gave place to a restless mood almost as soon as Mr. Carlisle was gone. Three years seemed more like what she wanted than three months. She felt ignorant, dark, and unhappy ; how was she to clear up this moral mist and see how the plan of life lay, without any hand to lead her or help her ? There was only one she knew in the world that could ; and from any application to him, or even any chance contact with him, Eleanor consciously shrank. *That* would never do ; that must never be heard of her. With all this, she began to dread the disturbing and confusing effects of Mr. Carlisle's visits to the country. He would come ; he had said so ; and Mrs. Powle kept reminding her of it upon every occasion.

Eleanor had been forbidden to ride alone. She did not dare ; she took to long lonely walks. It was only out of doors that she felt quite free ; in her own room at home, though never so private, her mother would at any time come with distracting subjects of conversation. Eleanor fled to the moor and to the wilds ; walked, and rested on the stones, and thought ; till she found think-

ing degenerate into musing; then she started up and went on. She tired herself. She did not find rest.

One day she took her course purposely to the ruined priory. It was a long walk; but Eleanor courted long walks. And when she got there, musing, it must be confessed, had a good time. She stepped slowly down the grass-grown nave of the old church, recalling with much bitterness the day of her betrothal there; blaming herself, and blaming her mother more. Yet at any rate that day she had set seal to her own fate; would she be able, and had she a right,—that was the worst question,—to break it now? She wandered on, out of the church, away from the beautiful old ivied tower, which seemed to look down on her with grave reproach from the staidness of years and wisdom; wound about over and among the piles of shapeless ruin and the bits of lichen and moss-grown walls, yet standing here and there; not saying to herself exactly where she was going, but trying if she could find out the way; till she saw a thicket of thorn and holly bushes that she remembered. Yes, the larches too, and the young growth of beech trees. Eleanor plunged through this thicket, as well as she could; it was not easy; and there before her was the clear spot of grass, the angle of the thick old wall, and the deep window that she wanted to see again. All still and lonely and wild. Eleanor went across and took a seat in the window as she had done once before, to rest and think.

And then what she thought of, was not the old monks, nor the exquisite fair view out of the window that had belonged to them; though it was a soft December day, and the light was as winning fair on house and hill and tree-top as if it had been a different season of the year. No cloud in the sky, and no dark shadows upon the earth. But Eleanor's thoughts went back to the thunder-storm, and her need then first felt of an inward sunshine

that would last in cloudy times. She recalled the talk about the Christian's helmet; with a weary, sorrowful, keen renewal of regret at her own want of it. The words Mr. Rhys had spoken about it at that time she could not very well remember; but well she remembered the impression of them, and the noble, clear calmness of his face and manner. Very unlike all other calmness and nobleness that she had seen. The nobleness of one whose head was covered by that royal basnet; the fearlessness of one whose brows were consciously shaded by it. The simplicity that had nothing to feign or conceal; the poise of manner that came from an established heart and conscience. Eleanor presently caught herself up. What was she thinking about Mr. Rhys for? True, the thought of him was very near the thought of his teaching; nevertheless the one thing concerned her, the other did not. Did it not? Eleanor sighed, and wished she could have a little of his wise guidance; for notwithstanding all she had heard him say, she felt in the dark.

In the midst of all this, Eleanor heard somebody humming a scrap of a tune on the other side of the holly bushes. Another instant told her it was a tune she had heard never but once before, and that once in Mr. Brooks's barn. There was besides a little rustling of the thorn bushes. Eleanor could think of but one person coming to that spot of the ruins; and in sudden terror she sprang from the window and rushed round the other corner of the wall. The tune ceased; Eleanor heard no more; but she dared not falter or look back. She was in a thicket on this side too, and in a mass of decayed ruins and rubbish which almost stopped her way. By determination and perseverance, with some knocks and scratches, she at last got free and stopped to breathe and think. Why was she so frightened? Mr. Carlisle. But what should she do now? Suppose she set off to walk home; she might be joined by the person she

wished to shun; it was impossible to foresee that he would sit an hour meditating in the old window. Over against Eleanor, a little distance off, only plantations of shrubbery and soft turf between, was the Rector's house. Best go there and take refuge, and then be guided by circumstances. She went accordingly, feeling sorrowful that she should have to run away from the very person whose counsel of all others she most needed.

The door was opened to Eleanor by the Rector himself.

"Ha! my dear Miss Powle," said the good doctor,—
"this is an honour to me. I don't know what you will do now, for my sister is away at Brompton—will you come in and see an old bachelor like myself?"

"If you will let me, sir."

"I shall be delighted, my dear Miss Eleanor! You were always welcome, ever since you were so high; and now that you are going to occupy so important a position here, I do not know a lady in the neighbourhood that deserves so much consideration as yourself. Come in—come in! How did you get here?"

"Taking a long walk, sir. Perhaps you will give me some refreshments."

"I shall be delighted. Come in here, and we will have luncheon together in my study—which was never so honoured before; but *I* think it is the pleasantest place in the house. The other rooms my sister fills with gimcracks, till I cannot turn round there without fear of breaking something. Now my old folios and octavos have tried a fall many a time—and many a one has tried a fall with them—ha! ha!—and no harm to anybody. Sit down there now, Miss Eleanor, and rest. That's what I call a pretty window. You see I am in no danger of forgetting my friend Mr. Carlisle here."

Eleanor looked out of the window very steadily; yet she was not refreshing her remembrance of Mr. Carlisle

neither. There were glimpses of a tall, alert figure, passing leisurely in and out among the trees and the ruins; finally coming out into full view and walking with brisk step over the greensward till he was out of sight. Eleanor knew it very well, the figure and the quick step; the energy and life in every movement. She heard no more of Dr. Cairnes for some time; though doubtless he was talking, for he had ordered luncheon and now it was served, and he was pressing her to partake of it. Dr. Cairnes' cheese was excellent; his hung beef was of prime quality; and the ale was of a superior brand, and the wine which he poured out for Eleanor was, he assured her, as its sparkling drops fell into the glass, of a purity and flavour "that even his friend Mr. Carlisle would not refuse to close his lips upon." Eleanor felt faint and weary, and she knew Mr. Carlisle's critical accuracy; but she recollected at the same time Mr. Rhys's cool abstinence, and she put the glass of wine away.

"Not?" said the doctor. "You would prefer a cup of chocolate. Bad taste, Miss Eleanor—wine is better for you, too. Ladies will sup chocolate, I believe; I wonder what they find in it. The thing is, my sister being away to-day, I don't know—"

Eleanor begged he would not mind that, nor her; however the chocolate was ordered and in due time brought.

"Now that will make you dull," said the doctor,—
"sleepy. It does not have, even on you, the reviving, brilliant effect of *this* beverage." And he put the bright glass of wine to his lips. It was not the first filled.

"Before I get dull, dear doctor, I want to talk to you."

"Ay?" said the doctor, looking at her over the wine.
"You do? What about? Say on, Miss Eleanor. I

am yours doubly now, by the past and the future. You may command me."

"It is about the present, I wish to talk," said Eleanor.

"What is it?"

"My mind is not at rest," said Eleanor, laying her hands in her lap and looking off again towards the ruins with their green and grey silent reminders,—“about religious subjects."

"Ah?" said Dr. Cairnes. "How is that, Miss Eleanor? Be a little more explicit with me, will you not?"

"I will. Dr. Cairnes, I am young now, but by and by decay must come to me, as it has come to that old pile yonder—as it comes to everything. I want security for my head and heart when earthly security fails."

Eleanor spoke slowly, looking out as she spoke all the while.

"Security!" said the doctor. "But my dear Miss Eleanor, you know the articles of our holy religion?"

"Yes,—” she said without stirring her position.

"Security is given by them, most amply and abundantly, to every sincere applicant. Your life has been a sheltered one, Miss Eleanor, and a kind one; you can have no very grievous sins to charge yourself with."

"I would like to get rid of such as I have," answered Eleanor without moving.

"You were baptized in infancy?"

"Yes, sir."

"You have never been confirmed?"

"No, sir."

"Every baptized child of the Church, Miss Eleanor owes it to God, to herself, and the Church, upon arriving at a proper age, to come forward and openly take upon herself—or himself—but I am talking of you,—the vows made for her in her infancy, at her baptism, by her sponsors. Upon doing this, she is received into full membership with the Church and entitled to all its priv-

ileges; and undoubtedly security is one of them. That is what you want to do, Miss Eleanor; and I am truly rejoiced that your mind is setting itself to the contemplation of its duties—and responsibilities. In the station you are preparing to occupy, the head of all this neighbourhood—Wiglands and Rythdale both—it is most important, most important, that your example should be altogether blameless and your influence thrown altogether on the right side. That influence, my dear Miss Eleanor, is very great.”

“Dr. Cairnes, my one single present desire, is to do right and feel safe, myself.”

“Precisely. And to do right, is the way to feel safe. I will give you a little work, preparatory to the ordinance of confirmation, Miss Eleanor, which I entreat you to study and prayerfully follow. That will relieve all your difficulties, I have no fear. There it is, Miss Eleanor.”

“Will this rite—will this ordinance,” said Eleanor closing her fingers on the book and for the first time looking the doctor straight in the face,—“will it give me that helmet of salvation, of which I have heard?”

“Hey? what is that?” said the doctor.

“I have heard—and read—of the Christian ‘helmet of salvation.’ I have seen that a person whose brows are covered by it, goes along fearless, hopeful, and happy, dreading nothing in this life or the next.—Will being confirmed, put this helmet upon my head?—make me fearless and happy too?”

“My dear Miss Eleanor, I cannot express how you astonish me. I always have thought you were one of the strongest-hearted persons I knew; and in your circumstances I am sure it was natural——But to your question. The benefit of confirmation, my dear young lady, as well as of every other ordinance of the Church, depends of course on the manner and spirit with which we

engage in it. There is, confirming and strengthening grace in it undoubtedly for all who come to the ordinance in humble obedience, with prayer and faith, and who truly take upon them their vows."

"But Dr. Cairnes, I might die before I could be confirmed; and I want rest and security now. I do not have it, day nor night. I have not, ever since the time when I was so ill last summer. I want it *now*."

"My dear Miss Eleanor, the only way to obtain security and rest, is in doing one's duty. Do your duty now, and it will come. Your conscience has taken up the matter, and will have satisfaction. Give it satisfaction, and rest will come."

"How can I give it satisfaction?" said Eleanor sitting up and looking at the doctor. "I feel myself guilty—I know myself exposed to ruin, to death that means death; what can I give to my conscience, to make it be still?"

"The Church offers absolution for their sins to all that are truly sorry for them," said the doctor. "Are you penitent on account of your sins, Miss Eleanor?"

"Penitent?—I don't know," said Eleanor drooping a little from her upright position. "I feel them, and know them, and wish them away; but if I were penitent, they would be gone, wouldn't they? and they are not gone."

"I see how it is," said the doctor. "You have too much leisure to think, and your thoughts are turning in upon themselves and becoming morbid. I think this is undue sensitiveness, my dear Miss Eleanor. The sins we wish away, will never be made a subject of judgment against us. I shall tell my friend Mr. Carlisle that his presence is wanted here, for something more important than the interests of the county. I shall tell him he must not let you think too much. I think he and I together can put you right. In the mean while, you read my little book."

"Dr. Cairnes, what I have said to you is said in strict confidence. I do not wish it spoken of, even to my mother."

"Of course, of course!" said the doctor. "*That* is all understood. The Church never reveals her children's secrets. But I shall only give him a little gentle hint, which will be quite sufficient, I have no doubt; and I shall have just the coöperation that I desire."

"How excellent your cheese is, Dr. Cairnes."

"Ah! you like it," said the doctor. "I am proud. I always purchase my cheese myself—that is one thing I do not leave to my sister. But *this* one I think is particularly fine. You won't take a half glass of ale with it?—no,—I know Mr. Carlisle does not like ale. But it would be a good sequent of your ride, nevertheless."

"I did not ride, sir. I walked."

"Walked from Ivy Lodge! All this way to see me, Miss Eleanor?"

"No sir—only for a walk, and to see the ruins. Then I was driven to take shelter here."

"I am very glad of it! I am very glad of it!" said the doctor. "I have not enjoyed my luncheon so much in a year's time; and you delight me too, my dear Miss Eleanor, by your present dispositions. But walk all the way here! I shall certainly write to Mr. Carlisle."

Eleanor's cheeks flushed, and she rose. "Not only all the way here, but all the way back again," said she; "so it is time I bade you good bye."

The doctor was very anxious to carry her home in the chaise; Eleanor was more determined that he should not; and determination as usual carried the day. The doctor shook his head as he watched her off.

"Are you going to shew this spirit to Mr. Carlisle?" he said.

Which remark gave Eleanor an impetus that carried her a third of her way home. During the remaining

two thirds she did a good deal of thinking ; and arrived at the Lodge with her mind made up. There was no chance of peace and a good time for her, without going away from home. Dr. Cairnes' officiousness would be sure to do something to arouse Mr. Carlisle's watchfulness ; and then—"the game will be up," said Eleanor to herself. "Between his being here and the incessant expectation of him, there will be no rest for me. I must get away." She laid her plans.

After dinner she slipped away and sought her father in his study. It was called his study, though very little of that character truly belonged to it. More truly it balanced between the two purposes of a smoking-room and an office ; for county business was undoubtedly done there ; and it was the nook of retirement where the Squire indulged himself in his favoured luxury ; the sweet weed. The Squire took it pure, in a pipe ; no cigars for him ; and filling his pipe Eleanor found him. She lit the pipe for him, and contrary to custom sat down. The Squire puffed away.

"I thought you didn't care for this sort of thing, Eleanor," he remarked. "Are you learning not to mind it already ? It is just as well ! Perhaps your husband will want you to sit with him when he smokes."

"I would not do that for any man in the world, papa, except you !"

"Ho ! Ho !" said the Squire. "Good wives, my dear, do not mind trifles. They had better not, at any rate."

"Papa," said Eleanor, whose cheeks were flaming "do you not think, since a girl must give up her liberty so completely in marrying, that she ought to be allowed a good little taste of it beforehand ?"

"St. George and the Dragon ! I do," said the Squire. "Your mother says it tends to lawlessness—and I say, I don't care. That is not *my* concern. If a man cannot rule his wife, he had better not have one—that is my

opinion; and in your case, my dear, there is no fear. Mr. Carlisle is quite equal to his duties, or I am mistaken in him."

Eleanor felt nearly wild under her father's speeches; nevertheless she sat perfectly quiet, only fiery about her cheeks.

"Then, papa, to come to the point, don't you think in the little time that remains to me for my own, I might be allowed to do what I please with myself?"

"I should say it was a plain case," said the Squire. "Take your pleasure, Nellie; I won't tether you. What do you want to do, child? I take it, you belong to me till you belong to somebody else."

"Papa, I want to run away, and make a visit to my aunt Caxton. I shall never have another chance in the world—and I want to go off and be by myself and feel free once more, and have a good time."

"Poor little duck!" said her father. "You are a sensible girl, Nellie. Go off; nobody shall hinder you."

"Papa, unless you back me, mamma and Mr. Carlisle will not hear of it."

"I'd go before he comes down then," said the Squire, knocking the ashes out of his pipe energetically. "St. George! I believe that man half thinks, sometimes, that I am one of his tenantry! The lords of Rythdale always did lord it over everything that came in their way. Now is your only chance, Eleanor; run away, if you're a mind to; Mr. Carlisle is master in his own house, no doubt, but he is not master in mine; and I say, you may go. Do him no harm to be kept on short commons for a little while."

With a joyful heart Eleanor went back to the drawing-room; and sat patiently still at some fancy work till Mrs. Powle waked up from a nap.

"Mamma, Dr. Cairnes wants me to be confirmed."

"Confirmed!"—Mrs. Powle echoed the word, sitting

bolt upright in her chair and opening her sleepy eyes wide at her daughter.

"Yes. He says I ought to be confirmed. He has given me a book upon confirmation to study."

"I wonder what you will do next!" said Mrs. Powle, sinking back. "Well, go on, if you like. Certainly, if you are to be confirmed, it ought to be done before your marriage. I wish anything *would* confirm you in sober ways."

"Mamma, I want to give this subject serious study, if I enter into it; and I cannot do it properly at home. I want to go away for a visit."

"Well—" said Mrs. Powle, thinking of some cousins in London.

"I want to be alone and quiet and have absolute peace for awhile; and this death of Lady Rythdale makes it possible. I want to go and make a visit to my aunt Caxton."

"Caxton!"—Mrs. Powle almost screamed. "Caxton! *There!* In the mountains of Wales! Eleanor, you are perfectly absurd. It is no use to talk to you."

"Mamma, papa sees no objection."

"*He* does not! So you have been speaking to him! Make your own fortunes, Eleanor! I see you ruined already. With what favour do you suppose Mr. Carlisle will look upon such a project? Pray have you asked yourself?"

"Yes, ma'am; and I am not going to consult him in the matter."

The tea-equipage and the Squire came in together and stopped the conversation. Eleanor took care not to renew it, knowing that her point was gained. She took her father's hint, however, and made her preparations short and sudden. She sent that night a word, telling of her wish, to Mrs. Caxton; and waited but till the answer arrived, waited on thorns, to set off. The Squire

looked rather moody the next day after his promise to Eleanor; but he would not withdraw it; and no other hindrance came. Eleanor departed safely, under the protection of old Thomas, the coachman, long a faithful servitor in the family. The journey was only part of the distance by railway; the rest was by posting; and a night had to be spent on the road.

Towards evening of the second day, Eleanor began to find herself in what seemed an enchanted region. High mountains, with picturesque bold outlines, rose against the sky; and every step was bringing her deeper and deeper among them, in a rich green meadow valley. The scenery grew only wilder, richer, and lovelier, until the sun sank behind the high western line; and still its loveliness was not lost; while grey shades and duskiness gathered over the mountain sides and gradually melted the meadows and their scattered wood growth into one hue. Then only the wild mountain outline cut against the sky, and sometimes the rushing of a little river, told Eleanor of the varied beauty the evening hid.

Little else she could see when the chaise stopped and she got out. Dimly a long, low building stretched before her at the side of the road; the rippling of water sounded softly at a little distance; the fresh mountain air blew in her face; then the house door opened.

CHAPTER XV.

"Face to face with the true mountains
I stood silently and still,
Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies, and most debonair good will."

THE house-door opened first to shew a girl in short petticoats and blue jacket holding up a light. Eleanor made towards it, across a narrow strip of courtyard. She saw only the girl, and did not feel certain whether she had come to the right house. For neither Mrs. Caxton nor her home had ever been seen by any of Mr. Powle's children; though she was his own sister. But Mrs. Caxton had married quite out of Mrs. Powle's world; and though now a widow, she lived still the mistress of a great cheese farm; quite out of Mrs. Powle's world still. The latter had therefore never encouraged intercourse. Mrs. Caxton was an excellent woman, no doubt, and extremely respectable; still, Ivy Lodge and the cheese farm were further apart in feeling than in geographical miles; and though Mrs. Caxton often invited her brother's children to come and pick buttercups in her meadows, Mrs. Powle always proved that to gather primroses in Rythdale was a higher employment, and much better for the children's manners, if not for their health. The Squire at this late day had been unaffectedly glad of Eleanor's proposal; avowing himself not ashamed of his sister or his children either. For Eleanor herself, she had no great expectation, except of rural retirement in a place where Mr. Carlisle would not follow

her. That was enough. She had heard besides that the country was beautiful, and her aunt well off.

As she stepped up now doubtfully to the girl with the light, looking to see whether she were right or wrong, the girl moved a little aside so as to light the entrance, and Eleanor passed on, discerning another figure behind. A good wholesome voice exclaimed, "You are welcome, my dear! It is Eleanor?"—and the next instant Mr. Powle's daughter found herself taken into one of those warm, gentle, genial embraces, that tell unmistakeably what sort of a heart moves the enfolding arms. It was rest and strength at once; and the lips that kissed her—there is a great deal of character in a kiss—were at once sweet and firm.

"You have been all day travelling, my dear. You must be in want of rest."

There was that sort of clear strength in the voice, to which one gives, even in the dark, one's confidence. Eleanor's foot fell more firmly on the tiled floor, as she followed her aunt along a passage or two; a little uncertainty in her heart was quieted; she was ready prepared to expect anything pleasant; and as they turned in at a low door, the expectation was met.

The door admitted them to a low-ceiled room, also with a tiled floor, large and light. A good wood fire burned in the quaint chimney piece; before it a table stood prepared for supper. A bit of carpet was laid down under the table and made a spot of extra comfort in the middle of the floor. Dark plain wainscoting, heavy furniture of simplest fashion, little windows well curtained; all nothing to speak of; all joined inexplicably to produce the impression of order, stability and repose, which seized upon Eleanor almost before she had time to observe details. But the mute things in a house have an odd way of telegraphing to a stranger what sort of a spirit dwells in the midst of them. It is always so;

and Mrs. Caxton's room assured Eleanor that her first notions of its mistress were not ill-founded. She had opportunity to test and strengthen them now, in the full blaze of lamp and firelight; as her aunt stood before her taking off her bonnet and wrappers and handing them over to another attendant with a candle and a blue jacket.

In the low room Mrs. Caxton looked even taller than belonged to her; and she was tall, and of noble full proportions that set off her height. Eleanor thought she had never seen a woman of more dignified presence; the head was set well back on the shoulders, the carriage straight, and the whole moral and physical bearing placid and quiet. Of course the actual movement was easy and fine; for that is with every one a compound of the physical and moral. Scarcely Elizabeth Fry had finer port or figure. The face was good, and strong; the eyes full of intelligence under the thick dark brows; all the lines of the face kind and commanding. A cap of very plain construction covered the abundant hair, which was only a little grey. Nothing else about Mrs. Caxton shewed age. Her dress was simple to quaintness; but relieved by her magnificent figure that effect was forgotten, or only remembered as enhancing the other. Eleanor sat down in a great leather chair, where she had been put, and looked on in a sort of charmed state; while her aunt moved about the table, gave quiet orders, made quiet arrangements, and finally took Eleanor's hand and seated her at the tea-table.

"Not poppies, nor mandragora—" could have had such a power of soothing over Eleanor's spirits. She sat at the table like a fairy princess under a friendly incantation; and the spell was not broken by any word or look on the part of her hostess. No questions of curiosity; no endeavours to find out more of Eleanor than she chose to shew; no surprise expressed at her mid-winter coming;

nor so much pleasure as would have the effect of surprise. So naturally and cordially and with as much simplicity her visit was taken, as if it had been a yearly accustomed thing, and one of Mr. Powle's children had not now seen her aunt for the first time. Indeed so rare was the good sense and kindness of this reception, that Eleanor caught herself wondering whether her aunt could already know more of her than she seemed to know; and not caring if she did! Yet it was impossible, for her mother would not tell her story, and her father could not; and Eleanor came round to admiring with fresh admiration this noble-looking, new-found relation, whose manner towards herself inspired her with such confidence and exercised already such a powerful attraction. And *this* was the mistress of a cheese-farm! Eleanor could not help being moved with a little curiosity on her part. This lady had no children; no near relations; for she was ignored by her brother's family. She lived alone; was she not lonely? Would she not wear misanthropical or weary traces of such a life? None; none were to be seen. Clear placidness dwelt on the brow, that looked as if nothing ever ruffled it; the eye was full of business and command; and the mouth,—its corners told of a fountain of sweetness somewhere in the region of the heart. Eleanor looked, and went back to her cup of tea and her supper with a renewed sense of comfort.

The supper was excellent too. It would have belied Mrs. Caxton's look of executive capacity if it had not been. No fault was to be discerned anywhere. The tea-service was extremely plain and inexpensive; such as Mrs. Powle could not have used; that was certain. But then the bread, and the mutton chops, and the butter, and even the tea, were such as Mrs. Powle's china was never privileged to bear. And though Mrs. Caxton left in the background every topic of doubtful agreeableness, the talk flowed steadily with abundance of mate-

rial and animation, during the whole supper-time. Mrs. Caxton was the chief talker. She had plenty to tell Eleanor of the country and people in the neighbourhood; of things to be seen and things to be done; so that supper moved slowly, and was a refreshment of mind as well as of body.

"You are very weary, my dear," said Mrs. Caxton, after the table was cleared away, and the talk had continued through all that time. And Eleanor confessed it. In the calm which was settling down upon her, the strain of hours and days gone by began to be felt.

"You shall go to your room presently," said Mrs. Caxton; "and you shall not get up to breakfast with me. That would be too early for you."

Eleanor was going to enter a protest, when her aunt turned and gave an order in Welsh to the blue jacket then in the room. And then Eleanor had a surprise. Mrs. Caxton took a seat at a little distance, before a stand with a book; and the door opening again, in poured a stream of blue jackets, three or four, followed by three men and a boy. All ranged themselves on seats round the room; and Mrs. Caxton opened her book and read a chapter in the Bible. Eleanor listened, in mute wonder where this would end. It ended in all kneeling down and Mrs. Caxton offering a prayer. An extempore prayer, which for simplicity, strength, and feeling, answered all Eleanor's sense of what a prayer ought to be; though how a woman could speak it before others and before *men*, filled her with astonishment. But it filled her with humility too, before it was done and Eleanor rose to her feet with an intense feeling of the difference between her aunt's character and her own; only equalled by her deep gladness at finding herself under the roof where she was.

Her aunt then took a candle and lighted her through the tiled passages, up some low wooden stairs, uncar-

peted; along more passages; finally into a large low matted chamber, with a row of little lattice windows. Comfort and simplicity were in all its arrangements; a little fire burning for her; Eleanor's trunks in a closet. When Mrs. Caxton had shewed her all that was necessary, she set down her candle on the low mantelshelf, and took Eleanor in her arms. Again those peculiar, gentle firm kisses fell upon her lips. But instead of "good night," Mrs. Caxton's words were,

"Do you pray for yourself, Eleanor?"

Eleanor dropped her head like a child on the breast before her. "Aunt Caxton, I do not know how!"

"Then the Lord Jesus has not a servant in Eleanor Powle?"

Eleanor was silent, thoughts struggling.

"You have not learned to love him, Eleanor?"

"I have only learned to wish to do it, aunt Caxton! I do wish that. It was partly that I might seek it, that I wanted to come here."

Then Eleanor heard a deep-spoken, "Praise the Lord!" that seemed to come out from the very heart on which she was leaning. "If you have a mind to seek him, my dear, he is willing that you should find. 'The Lord is good to the soul that seeketh him.'"

She kissed Eleanor on the two temples, released her and went down stairs. And Eleanor sat down before her fire, feeling as if she were in a paradise.

It was all the more so, from the unlikeness of everything that met her eye, to all she had known before. The chimney piece at which she was looking as she sat there—it was odd and quaint as possible, to a person accustomed only to the modern fashions of the elegant world; the fire-tongs and shovel would have been surely consigned to the kitchen department at Ivy Lodge. Yet the little blazing fire, framed in by its rows of coloured tiles, looked as cheerfully into Eleanor's face as any blaze

that had ever greeted it. All was of a piece with the fire-place. Simple to quaintness, utterly plain and costless, yet with none of the essentials of comfort forgotten or neglected; from the odd little lattice windows to the tiled floor, everything said she was at a great distance from her former life, and Mr. Carlisle. The room looked as if it had been made for Eleanor to settle her two life-questions in it. Accordingly she took them up without delay; but Eleanor's mind that night was like a kaleidoscope. Images of different people and things started up, with wearying perversity of change and combination; and the question, whether she would be a servant of God like her aunt Caxton, was inextricably twisted up with the other question; whether she could escape being the baroness of Rythdale and the wife of Mr. Carlisle. And Eleanor did nothing but tire herself with thinking that night; until the fire was burnt out and she went to bed. Nevertheless she fell asleep with a sense of relief more blissful than she had known for months. She had put a little distance at least between her and her enemies.

Eleanor had meant to be early next day, but rest had taken too good hold of her; it was long past early when she opened her eyes. The rays of the morning sun were peeping in through the lattices. Eleanor sprang up and threw open, or rather threw back, one of the windows, for the lattice slid in grooves instead of hanging on hinges. She would never have found out how to open them, but that one lattice stood slightly pushed back already. When it was quite out of her way, Eleanor's breath almost stopped. A view so wild, so picturesque, so rare in its outlines of beauty, she thought she had never seen. Before her, at some distance, beyond a piece of broken ground, rose a bare-looking height of considerable elevation, crowned by an old tower massively constructed, broken, and ivy-grown. The little

track of a footpath was visible that wound round the hill; probably going up to the tower. Further beyond, with evidently a deep valley or gorge between, a line of much higher hills swept off to the left; bare also, and moulded to suit a painter of weird scenes, yet most lovely, and all seen now in the fair morning beams which coloured and lighted them and the old tower together. Nothing else. The road indeed by which she had come passed close before Eleanor's window; but trees embowered it, though they had been kept down so as not to hinder this distant view. Eleanor sat a long while spell bound before the window.

A noise disturbed her. It was one of the blue jackets bringing a tray with breakfast. Eleanor eagerly asked if Mrs. Caxton had taken breakfast; but all she got in return was a series of unintelligible sounds; however as the girl pointed to the sun, she concluded that the family breakfast hour was past. Everything strange again! At Ivy Lodge the breakfast hour lasted till the lagging members of the family had all come down; and here there was no family! How could happiness belong to anybody in such circumstances? The prospect within doors, Eleanor suddenly remembered, was yet more interesting than the view without. She eat her breakfast and dressed and went down.

But to find the room where she had been the evening before, was more than her powers were equal to. Going from one passage to another, turning and turning back, afraid to open doors to ask somebody; Eleanor was quite bewildered, when she happily was met by her aunt. The morning kiss and greeting renewed in her heart all the peace of last night.

"I cannot find my way about in your house, aunt Caxton. It seems a labyrinth."

"It will not seem so long. Let me shew you the way out of it."

Through one or two more turnings Mrs. Caxton led her niece, and opening a door took her out at the other side, the back of the house, where Eleanor's eyes had not been. Here there was a sort of covered gallery, extending to some length under what was either an upper piazza or the projection of the second story floor. The ground was paved with tiles as usual, and wooden settles stood along the wall, and plain stone pillars supported the roof. But as Eleanor's eyes went out further she caught her aunt's hand in ecstasy.

From almost the edge of the covered gallery, a little terraced garden sloped down to the edge of a small river. The house stood on a bank above the river, at a commanding height; and on the river's further shore a rich sweep of meadow and pasture land stretched to the right and left and filled the whole breadth of the valley; on the other side of which, right up from the green fields, rose another line of hills. These were soft, swelling, round-topped hills, very different in their outlines from those in another quarter which Eleanor had been enjoying from her window. It was winter now, and the garden had lost its glory; yet Eleanor could see, for her eye was trained in such matters, that good and excellent care was at home in it; and some delicate things were there for which a slight protection had been thought needful. The river was lost to view immediately at the right; it wound down from the other hand through the rich meadows under a thick embowering bosky growth of trees; and just below the house it was spanned by a rude stone bridge, from which a hedged lane led off on the other side. All along the fences or hedges which enclosed the fields grew also beautiful old trees; the whole landscape was decked with wood growth, though the hills had little or none. All the more the sweet contrast; the rare harmony; the beautiful mingling of soft cultivation with what was wild and picturesque and

barren. And the river gurgled on, with a fresh sound that told of its activity; and a very large herd of cows spotted the green turf in some of the meadows on the other side of the stream.

"I never saw any place so lovely," exclaimed Eleanor; "never!"

"This is my favourite walking place in winter," said Mrs. Caxton; "when I want to walk under shelter, or not to go far from home."

"How charming that garden must be when the spring comes!"

"Are you fond of gardening?" said Mrs. Caxton.

A talk upon the subject followed, in which Eleanor perceived with some increase of respect that her aunt was no ignoramus; nay, that she was familiar with delicacies both in the practice and the subjects of horticulture that were not well known to Eleanor, in spite of her advantages of the Lodge and Rythdale conservatories and gardens both together. In the course of this talk, Eleanor noticed anew all the indications that had pleased her last night; the calm good sense and self-possession; the quiet dignity; the decision; the kindness. And perhaps Mrs. Caxton too made her observations. But this was the mistress of the cheese-farm!

A pause fell in their talk at length; probably both had matter for reflection.

"Have you settled that question, Eleanor?" said her aunt meaningly.

"That question?—O no, aunt Caxton! It is all confusion; and it is all confused with another question."

There was more than talk in this evidently, for Eleanor's face had all darkened. Mrs. Caxton answered calmly,

"My dear, the first thing I would do, would be to separate them."

"Aunty, they are like two wrestlers; I cannot seem

to separate them. If I think of the one, I get hold of the other; and if I take up the other, I am obliged to think of the one; and my mind is the fighting ground."

"Then the two questions are in reality one?"

"No, aunt Caxton—they are not. Only they both press for attention at once."

"Which is the most important?"

"This one—about which you asked me," Eleanor said, drooping her head a little.

"Then decide that to-day, Eleanor."

"Aunty, I have decided it—in one way. I am determined what I will be—if I can. Only I do not see how. And before I *do* see how,—perhaps—the other question may have decided itself; and then—Aunty, I cannot tell you about it to-day. Let me wait a few days; till I know you better and you have time to know me."

"Then, as it is desirable you should lose no time, I shall keep you with me, Eleanor. Would you like to-morrow to go through the dairies and see the operation of cheese-making? Did you ever see it?"

"Aunt Caxton, I know no more about cheese than that I have eaten it sometimes. I would like to go to-morrow, or to-day; whenever you please."

"The work is nearly over for to-day."

"Do they make cheese in your dairy every day, aunt Caxton?"

"Two every day."

"But you must have a great number of cows, ma'am?"

"There they are," said her aunt, looking towards the opposite meadows. "We milk between forty and fifty at present; there are about thirty dry."

"Seventy or eighty cows!" exclaimed Eleanor "Why aunt Caxton, you must want the whole valley for their pasturing."

"I want no more than I have," said Mrs. Caxton

quietly. "You see, those meadows on the other side of the river look rich. It is a very good cheese farm."

"How far does it extend, aunty?"

"All along, the meadowland, as far as you see."

"I do not believe there is a pleasanter or prettier home in all the kingdom!" Eleanor exclaimed. "How charming, aunt Caxton, all this must be in summer, when your garden is in bloom."

"There is a way of carrying summer along with us through all the year, Eleanor; do you know that?"

"Do you wear the 'helmet' too?" thought Eleanor. "I have no doubt but you do, over that calm brow!" But she only looked wistfully at her aunt, and Mrs. Caxton changed the conversation. She sat down with Eleanor on a settle, for the day was mild and the place sheltered; and talked with her of home and her family. She shewed an affectionate interest in all the details concerning her brother's household and life, but Eleanor admired with still increasing and profound respect, the delicacy which stopped every inquiry at the point where delicacy might wish to withhold the answer. The uprightest self-respect went hand in hand with the gentlest regard and respect for others. To this reserve, Eleanor was more communicative than she could have been to another manner; and on some points her hesitancy told as much, perhaps, as her disclosures on other points; so that Mrs. Caxton was left with some general idea, if not more, of the home Eleanor had lived her life in and the various people who had made it what it was. On all things that touched Rythdale Eleanor was silent; and so was Mrs. Caxton.

The conversation flowed on to other topics; and the whole day was a gentle entertainment to Eleanor. The perpetual good sense, information, and shrewdness of her hostess was matter of constant surprise and interest. Eleanor had never talked with anybody who talked so

well ; and she felt obliged unconsciously all the time to produce the best of herself. That is not a disagreeable exercise ; and on the whole the day reeled off on silver wheels. It concluded as the former day had done ; and in the warm prayer uttered by her aunt, Eleanor could not help feeling there was a pulse of the heart for *her* ; for her darkness and necessities. It sent her to her room touched, and humbled, and reminded ; but Eleanor's musings this night were no more fruitful of results than those of last night had been. They resolved themselves into a long waking dream. Mr. Carlisle exercised too much mastery over her imagination, for any other concern to have fair chance till his question was disposed of. Would he come to look for her there ? It was just like him ; but she had a little hope that her mother's pride would prevent his being furnished with the necessary information. That Eleanor should be sought and found by him on a cheese farm, the mistress of the farm her own near relation, would not probably meet Mrs. Powle's notions of what it was expedient to do or suffer. A slender thread of a hope ; but that was all. Supposing he came ? Eleanor felt she had no time to lose. She could only deal with Mr. Carlisle at a distance. In his presence, she knew now, she was helpless. But a vague sense of wrong combated all her thoughts of what she wished to do ; with a confused and conflicting question of what was right. She wearied herself to tears with her dreaming, and went to bed to aggravate her troubles in actual dreams ; in which the impossible came in to help the disagreeable.

CHAPTER XVI.

"What if she be fastened to this fool lord,
Dare I bid her abide by her word?"

THE next morning nevertheless was bright, and Eleanor was early down stairs. And now she found that the day was begun at the farmhouse in the same way in which it was ended. A reverent, sweet, happy committing of all her affairs and her friends to God, in the presence and the company of her household, was Mrs. Caxton's entrance, for her and them, upon the work of the day. Breakfast was short and very early, which it had to be if Eleanor wanted to see the operations of the dairy; and then Mrs. Caxton and she went thither; and then first Eleanor began to have a proper conception of the magnitude and complication of the business her aunt presided over.

The dairies were of great extent, stretching along the ground floor of the house, behind and beyond the covered gallery where she and her aunt had held their first long conversation the day before. Tiled floors, as neat as wax; oaken shelves, tubs, vats, baskets, cheese-hoops, presses; all as neat and sweet as it was possible for anything to be, looked like a confusion of affairs to Eleanor's eye. However, the real business done that morning was sufficiently simple; and she found it interesting enough to follow patiently every part of the process through to the end. Several blue jackets were in attendance; some Welsh, some English; each as diligent at her work as

if she only had the whole to do. And among them Eleanor noticed how admirably her aunt played the mistress and acted the executive head. Quietly, simply, as her words were spoken, they were nevertheless words that never failed to be instantly obeyed; and the service that was rendered her was given with what seemed the alacrity of affection, as well as the zeal of duty. Eleanor stood by, watching, amused, intent; yet taking in a silent lesson of character all the while, that touched her heart and made her draw a deep breath now and then. The last thing visited was the cheese house, the room where the cheeses were stored for ripening, quite away from all the dairies. Here there was a forest of cheeses; standing on end and lying on shelves, in various stages of maturity.

"Two a day!" said Eleanor looking at them. "That makes a wonderful many in the course of the year."

"Except Sundays," said Mrs. Caxton. "No cheese is made on Sunday in my dairy, nor any dairywork done, except milking the cows and setting the milk."

"I meant except Sundays, of course."

"It is not "of course" here," said Mrs. Caxton. "The common practice in large dairy farms is to do the same work on the seventh day that is done all the six."

"But that is wrong, aunty, it seems to me."

"Wrong? Of course it is wrong; but the defence is, that it is necessary. If Sunday's milk is not made at once into cheese, it must wait till Monday; and not only double work must be done then, for Monday will have its own milk, but double sets of everything will be needed; tubs and presses and all. So people think they cannot afford it."

"Well, how can they, aunt Caxton? There seems reason in that."

"Reason for what?"

"Why, I mean, it seems they have some reason for

working on the Sabbath—not to lose all that milk. It is one seventh of all they have.”

Mrs. Caxton replied in a very quiet manner,—“‘Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God ; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth.’”

“But aunt Caxton,” said Eleanor a little doubtfully,—“he gives it in the use of means?”

“Do you think he blesses the use of means he has forbidden?”

Eleanor was silent a moment.

“Aunt Caxton, people do get rich so, do they not?”

“‘The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich,’” said Mrs. Caxton contentedly,—“‘and he addeth no sorrow with it.’ That is the sort of riches I like best.”

Eleanor did not answer ; a kind of moisture came up in her eyes, for she felt poor in those riches.

“It is mere want of faith, Eleanor, that pleads such a reason,” Mrs. Caxton went on. “It is taking the power to get wealth into our own hands. If it is in God’s hands, it is just as easy certainly for him to give it to us in the obedient use of means as in the disobedient use of them ; and much more likely that he will. Many a man has become poor by his disobedience, for one that has been allowed to prosper awhile in spite of it. If the statistics were made up, men would see. Meanwhile, never anybody trusted the Lord and was confounded.”

“Then what do you do with the seventh day’s milk, aunt Caxton?”

“I make butter of it. But I would pour it away down the river, Eleanor, before I would make it an excuse for disobeying God.”

This was said without any heat, but as the quietest of conclusions. Eleanor stood silent, wondering at her aunt’s cheeses and notions together. She was in a new world, surely. Yet a secret feeling of respect was every moment mounting higher.

"The principle is universally true, Eleanor, that the safe way in everything is the way of obedience. Consequences are not in our hands. It is only unbelief that would make consequences a reason for going out of the way. 'Trust in the Lord, and keep his way; so shalt he exalt thee to inherit the land.' I have had nothing but prosperity, Eleanor, ever since I began the course which my neighbours and servants thought would destroy me."

"I wanted to ask you that, aunt Caxton;—how it had been."

"But my dear," said Mrs. Caxton, the smile with which she had turned to Eleanor fading into placid gravity again,—“if it had been otherwise, it would have made no difference. I would rather be poor, with my Lord's blessing, than have all the principality without it.”

Eleanor went away thinking. All this applied to the decision of her own affairs; and perhaps Mrs. Caxton had intended it should. But yet, how should she decide? To do the thing that was right,—Eleanor wished that,—and did not know what it was. Her wishes said one thing, and prayed for freedom. A vague, tramelling sense of engagements entered into and expectations formed and pledges given, at times confused all her ideas; and made her think it might be her duty to go home and finish wittingly what she had begun in ignorance what she was doing. It would be now to sacrifice herself. Was she called upon to do that? What was right?

Mrs. Caxton never alluded any further to Eleanor's private affairs; and Eleanor never forgetting them, kept them in the darkness of her own thoughts and did not bring them up to the light and her aunt's eye. Only for this drawback, the days would have passed delightfully. The next day was Sunday.

"We have a long drive to church, Eleanor," said her aunt. "How will you go?"

"With you, aunty."

"I don't know about that; my car has no place for you. Are you a horsewoman?"

"O aunty, nothing would be so delightful! if you have anything I can ride. Nothing would be so delightful. I half live in the saddle at home."

"You do? Then you shall go errands for me. I will furnish you with a Welsh pony."

And this very day Eleanor mounted him to ride to church. Her aunt was in a light car that held but herself and the driver. Another vehicle, a sort of dog cart, followed with some of the servants. The day was mild and pleasant, though not brilliant with sunbeams. It made no matter. Eleanor could not comprehend how more loveliness could have been crowded into the enjoyment of two hours. On her pony she had full freedom for the use of her eyes; the road was excellent, and winding in and out through all the crookedness of the valley they threaded, she took it at all points of view. Nothing could be more varied. The valley itself, rich and wooded, with the little river running its course, marked by a thick embowering of trees; the hills that enclosed the valley taking every form of beauty, sometimes wild and sometimes tame, heathery and barren, rough and rocky, and again rounded and soft. Along these hills came into view numberless dwellings, of various styles and sizes; with once in a while a bold castle breaking forth in proud beauty, or a dismantled ruin telling of pride and beauty that had been. Eleanor had no one to talk to, and she did not want to talk. On horseback, and on a Welsh pony, no Black Maggie or Tippoo, and in these wonderful new strange scenes, she felt free; free from Mr. Carlisle and his image for the moment; and though knowing that her bondage would

return, she enjoyed her freedom all the more. The little pony was satisfactory; and as there was no need of taking a gallop to-day, Eleanor had nothing to desire.

The ride ended at the loveliest of all picturesque villages; so Eleanor thought; nestled in what seemed the termination of the valley. A little village, with the square tower of the church rising up above the trees; all the houses stood among trees; and the river was crossed by a bridge just above, and tore down a precipice just below; so near that its roar was the constant lullaby of the inhabitants. It was the only sound to-day, rising in Sabbath stillness over the hills. After all this ride, the service in the little church did not disappoint expectation; it was sound, warm and good; and Eleanor mounted her pony and rode home again, almost wishing she could take service with her aunt as a dairymaid forever. All the day was sweet to Eleanor. But at the end of it a thought darted into her mind, with the keenness of an arrow. Mr. Carlisle in a few days more might have learned of her run-away freak and of her hiding-place and have time to come after her. There was a barb to the thought; for Eleanor could not get rid of it.

She begged the pony the next day, and the next, and went very long rambling rides; in the luxury of being alone. They would have been most delightful, but for the idea that haunted her, and which made her actually afraid to enter the house on her return home. This state of things was not to be borne much longer.

"You have let the pony tire you, Eleanor," Mrs. Caxton remarked. It was the evening of the second day, and the two ladies were sitting in the light of the wood fire.

"Ma'am, he could not do that. I live half my life on horseback at home."

"Then how am I to understand the long-drawn breaths which I hear from you every now and then?"

Mrs. Caxton was twisting up paper lighters. She was rarely without something in her fingers. Eleanor was doing nothing. At her aunt's question she half laughed, and seized one of the strips of paper to work upon. Her laugh changed into a sigh.

"Aunt Caxton, do you always find it easy to know what is the right thing to do—in all circumstances?"

"I have always infallible counsel that I can take."

"You mean the Bible? But the Bible does not tell one everything."

"I mean prayer."

"Prayer!—But my dear aunt Caxton!—"

"What is it, my dear?"

"I mean, that one wants an answer to one's perplexing questions."

"Mine never fail of an answer," said Mrs. Caxton.

"If it is to be found in the Bible, I find it; if not, I go to the Lord and get it from him."

"How, my dear aunt Caxton? How can you have an answer—in that way?"

"I ask to be directed—and I always am, Eleanor; always right. What do you think prayer is good for?"

"But aunt Caxton!—I never heard of such a thing in my life! Please forgive me."

"If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; *and it shall be given him.*" Did you never hear that, Eleanor?"

"Aunt—excuse me,—it is something I know nothing about."

"You never had an answer to your own prayers?"

"No, ma'am," said Eleanor drooping.

"My dear, there may be two reasons for that. Who-

ever wishes direction from the Lord, must be absolutely willing to follow it, whatever it be—we may not ask counsel of him as we do of our fellow-creatures, bent upon following our own all the while. The Lord knows our hearts, and withholds his answer when we ask so.”

“How do you know what the answer is, aunty?”

“It may be given in various ways. Sometimes circumstances point it out; sometimes attention is directed to a word in the Bible; sometimes, ‘thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.’”

Eleanor did not answer; she thought her aunt was slightly fanatical.

“There is another reason for not getting an answer, Eleanor. It is, not believing that an answer will be given.”

“Aunty, how can one help that?”

“By simply looking at what God has promised, and trusting it. ‘But let a man ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.’”

“Aunt Caxton, I am exactly like such a wave of the sea. And in danger of being broken to pieces like one.”

“Many a one has been,” said Mrs. Caxton. But it was tenderly said, not coldly; and the impulse to go on was irresistible. Eleanor changed her seat for one nearer.

“Aunt Caxton, I want somebody’s help dreadfully.”

“I see you do.”

“Do you see it, ma’am?”

“I think I have seen it ever since you have been here.”

“But at the same time, aunty, I do not know how to ask it.”

"Those are sometimes the neediest cases. But I hope you will find a way, my dear."

Eleanor sat silent nevertheless, for some minutes; and then she spoke in a lowered and changed tone.

"Aunt Caxton, you know the engagements I am under?"

"Yes. I have heard."

"What should a woman do—what is it her duty to do—who finds herself in every way bound to fulfil such engagements, except—"

"Except what?"

"Except her own heart, ma'am," Eleanor said low and ashamed.

"My dear, you do not mean that your heart was not in these engagements when you made them?"

"I did not know where it was, aunty. It had nothing to do with them."

"Where is it now?"

"It is not in them, ma'am."

"Eleanor, let us speak plainly. Do you mean that you do not love this gentleman whom you have promised to marry?"

Eleanor hesitated, covered her face, and hesitated; at last spoke.

"Aunt Caxton, I thought I did;—but I know now I do not; not as I think I ought;—I do not as he loves me." Eleanor spoke with burning cheeks, which her aunt could see even in the firelight and though Eleanor's hand endeavoured to shield them.

"What made you enter into these engagements, my dear?"

"The will and power of two other people, aunt Caxton—and, I am afraid, now, a little ambition of my own was at work in it. And I liked him too. It was not a person that I did not like. But I did not know what I was doing. I liked him, aunt Caxton."

"And now it is a question with you whether you will fulfil these engagements?"

"Yes ma'am,—because I do not wish to fulfil them. I do not know whether I ought, or ought not."

Mrs. Caxton was silent in her turn.

"Eleanor,—do you like some one else better?"

"Nobody else likes me better, aunt Caxton—there is nothing of that kind—"

"Still my question is not answered, Eleanor. Have *you* more liking for any other person?"

"Aunt Caxton—I do not know—I have seen—I do not know how to answer you!" Eleanor said in bitter confusion; then hiding her face she went on—"Just so much as this is true, aunt Caxton,—I have seen, what makes me know that I do not love Mr. Carlisle; not as he loves me."

Mrs. Caxton stooped forward, took Eleanor's hands down from her face and kissed her. It was a sad, drooping, pained face, hot with shame.

"My child," she said, "your honesty has saved you. I could not have advised you, Eleanor, if you had not been frank with me. Poor child!"

Eleanor came down on the floor and hid her face in Mrs. Caxton's lap. Her aunt kept one hand softly resting on her hair while she spoke. She was silent first, and then she spoke very tenderly.

"You did not know, at the time you engaged yourself to this gentleman, that you were doing him wrong?"

"No, ma'am—I thought rather of wrong to myself."

"Why?"

"They were in such a hurry, ma'am."

"Since then, you have seen what you like better."

"Yes, ma'am,"—said Eleanor doubtfully,—"*or* what I know I *could* like better, if there was occasion. That is all."

"Now the question is, in these circumstances, what is your duty to Mr. Carlisle."

Eleanor lifted her head to look into her aunt's face for the decision to come.

"The rule of judgment is not far off, Eleanor; it is the golden rule. 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.' My dear, take the case of the person you could like best in the world;—would you have such a person marry you if his heart belonged to somebody else?"

"Not for the whole world!" said Eleanor raising her head which had fallen again. "But aunt Caxton, that is not my case. My heart is not anybody's."

"Put it differently then. Would you marry such a man, if you knew that his mere liking for another was stronger than his love for you?"

"I think—I would rather die!" said Eleanor slowly.

"Then I think your question is answered."

"But aunt Caxton, it is not answered. Mr. Carlisle would not feel so. I know, he would have me marry him, if he knew that my heart was a thousand times another person's—which it is not."

"Don't alter the case," said Mrs. Caxton, "except to make it stronger. If he were the right sort of man, he would not have you do so. There is no rule that we should make other people's wishes our standard of right."

"But aunt Caxton, I have done Mr. Carlisle grievous wrong. O, I feel that!"

"Yes. What then?"

"Am I not bound to make him all the amends in my power?"

"Short of doing further wrong. Keep right and wrong always clear, Eleanor. They never mean the same thing."

"Aunty, what you must think of me!"

"I think of you just now as saved from shipwreck. Many a girl has drifted on in the course you were going, without courage to get out of the current, until she has destroyed herself; and perhaps somebody else."

"I do not think I had much courage, aunt Caxton," said Eleanor blushing.

"What had you, then?"

"It was mainly my horror of marrying that man, after I found I did not love him. And yet, aunt Caxton, I do like him; and I am very, very, very sorry! It has almost seemed to me sometimes that I ought to marry him and give him what I can; and yet, if I were ready, I would rather die."

"Is your doubt settled?"

"Yes, ma'am,"—said Eleanor sadly.

"My dear, you have done wrong,—I judge, somewhat ignorantly,—but mischief can never be mended by mischief. To marry one man, preferring another, is the height of disloyalty to both him and yourself; unless you can lay the whole truth before him; and then, as I think, in most cases it would be the height of folly."

"I will write to Mr. Carlisle to-morrow."

"And then, Eleanor, what was the other question you came here to settle?"

"It is quite a different question, aunty, and yet it was all twisted up with the other."

"You can tell it me; it will hardly involve greater confidence," said Mrs. Caxton, bending over and kissing Eleanor's brow which rested upon her knee. "Eleanor, I am very thankful you came to Plassy."

The girl rose up and kneeling beside her hid her face in Mrs. Caxton's bosom. "Aunt Caxton, I am so glad! I have wanted just this help so long! and this refuge. Put your arms both round me, and hold me tight."

Mrs. Caxton said nothing for a little while. She

waited for Eleanor to take her own time and speak. Very still the two were. There were some straining sobs that came from the one and went to the heart of the other; heavy and hard; but with no sound till they were quieted.

"Aunt Caxton," said Eleanor at last, "the other question was that one of a refuge."

"A heavenly one?"

"Yes. I had heard of a 'helmet of salvation'—I wanted it;—but I do not know how to get it."

"Do you know what it is?"

"Not very clearly. But I have seen it, aunt Caxton;—I know it makes people safe and happy. I want it for myself."

"Safe from what?"

"From—all that I feared when I was dangerously ill last summer."

"What did you fear, Eleanor?"

"All the future, aunt Caxton. I was not ready, I knew, to go out of this world. I am no better now."

They had not changed their relative positions. Eleanor's face still lay on her aunt's bosom; Mrs. Caxton's arms still enfolded her.

"Bless the Lord! there is such a helmet," she said; "but we cannot manufacture it, Eleanor, nor even buy it. If you have it at all, you must take it as a free gift."

"How do you mean?"

"If you are willing to be a soldier of Christ, he will give you his armour."

"Aunt Caxton, I do not understand."

"It is only to take the promises of God, my dear, if you will take them obediently. Jesus has declared that 'whosoever believeth on him, hath everlasting life.'"

"But I cannot exactly understand what believing in him means. I am very stupid." Eleanor raised her head and looked now in her aunt's face.

"Do you understand his work for us?"

"I do not know, ma'am."

"My dear, it is the work of love that was not willing to let us be miserable. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. He gave himself a ransom for all. He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

"Yes, I believe I understand that," said Eleanor wearily.

"The only question is, whether we will let him bring us. The question is, whether we are willing to accept this substitution of the innocent One for our guilty selves, and be his obedient children. If we are—if we rely on him and his blood only, and are willing to give up ourselves to him, then the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin. No matter though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. There is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit."

"But I do not walk so," said Eleanor.

"Do you want to walk so?"

"O yes, ma'am! yes!" said Eleanor clasping her hands. "I desire it above all possible things. I want to be such a one."

"If you truly desire it, my dear, it is certain that you may have what you want; for the Lord's will is not different. He died for this very thing, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. There is an open door before you; all things are ready; you have only to plead the promises and enter in. The Lord himself says, Come."

"Aunt Caxton, I understand, I think; but I do not feel; not anything but fear,—and desire."

"This is the mere statement of truth, my dear; it is like the altar with the wood laid in readiness and the sacrifice—all cold; and till fire falls down from heaven, no incense will arise from earth. But if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

"I am a poor creature, aunt Caxton!" said Eleanor, hiding her face again. And again Mrs. Caxton's arm came tenderly round her. And again Eleanor's tears flowed, this time in a flood.

"Certainly you are a poor creature, Eleanor. I am glad you are finding it out. But will you flee to the stronghold, you poor little prisoner of hope?"

"I think I am rather the prisoner of fear, aunty."

"Hope is a better gaoler, my dear."

"But that is the very thing that I want."

"The Lord give it you!"

They sat a good while in stillness after that, each thinking her own thoughts; or perhaps those of the elder lady took the form of prayers. At last Eleanor raised her head and kissed her aunt's lips earnestly.

"How good of you to let me come to Plassy!" she said.

"I shall keep you here now. You will not wish to be at home again for some time."

"No, ma'am. No indeed I shall not."

"What are you going to do about Mr. Carlisle?"

"I shall write to-morrow. Or to-night."

"And tell him?"

"The plain truth, aunt Caxton. I mean, the truth of the fact, of course. It is very hard!"—said Eleanor sorrowfully.

"It is doubtless hard; but it is the least of all the choice of evils you have left yourself. Write to-night,—

and here, if you will. If you can without being disturbed by me."

"The sight of you will only help me, aunt Caxton. But I did not know the harm I was doing when I entered into all this."

"I believe it. Go and write your letter."

Eleanor brought her paper-case and sat down at the table. Mrs. Caxton ordered other lights and was mutely busy at her own table. Not a word was spoken for a good while. It was with a strange mixture of pain and bursting gladness that Eleanor wrote the letter which she hoped would set her free. But the gladness was enough to make her sure it ought to be written; and the pain enough to make it a bitter piece of work. The letter was finished, folded, sealed; and with a sigh Eleanor closed her paper-case.

"What sort of a clergyman have you at home?" Mrs. Caxton asked. She had not spoken till then.

"He is a kind old man—he is a good man," Eleanor said, picking for words; "I like him. He is not a very interesting preacher."

"Did you ever hold any talk with him on your thoughts of hope, and fear?"

"I could not, ma'am. I have tried; but I could not bring him to the point. He referred me to confirmation and to doing my duty; he did not help me."

"It is not a happy circumstance, that his public teaching should raise questions which his private teaching cannot answer."

"O it did not!" said Eleanor. "Dr. Cairnes never raised a question in anybody's mind, I am sure; never in mine."

"The light that sprung up in your mind then, came you do not know whence?"

"Yes, ma'am, I do," said Eleanor with a little difficulty. "It came from the words and teaching of a

living example. But in me it seems to be only darkness."

Mrs. Caxton said no more, and Eleanor added no more. The servants came in to family prayer; and then they took their candles and bade each other an affectionate good night. And Eleanor slept that night without dreaming.

CHAPTER XVII.

"For something that abode endued
With temple-like repose, an air
Of life's kind purposes pursued
With order'd freedom sweet and fair.
A tent pitched in a world not right
It seem'd, whose inmates, every one,
On tranquil faces, bore the light
Of duties beautifully done."

How did the days pass after that? In restless anxiety, with Eleanor; in miserable uncertainty and remorse and sorrow. She counted the hours till her despatch could be in Mr. Carlisle's hands; then she figured to herself the pain it would cause him; then she doubted fearfully what the immediate effect would be. It might be, to bring him down to Plassy with the utmost speed of post-horses; and again Eleanor reckoned the stages and estimated the speed at which Mr. Carlisle's postillions could be made to travel, and the time when it would be possible for this storm to burst upon Plassy. That day Eleanor begged the pony and went out. She wandered for hours, among unnumbered, and almost unheeded, beauties of mountain and vale; came home at a late hour and crept in by a back entrance. No stranger had come; the storm had not burst yet; and Mrs. Caxton was moved to pity all the supper time and hours of the evening, at the state of fear and constraint in which Eleanor evidently dwelt.

"My dear, did you like this man?" she said when they were bidding each other good night.

"Mr. Carlisle?—yes, very well; if only he had not wanted me to marry him."

"But you fear him, Eleanor."

"Because, aunt Caxton, he always had a way of making me do just what he wished."

"Are you so easily governed, Eleanor, by one whom you do not love? I should not have thought it."

"I do not know how it was, aunty. I had begun wrong, in the first place; I was in a false position;—and lately Mr. Carlisle has taken it into his head, very unnecessarily, to be jealous; and I could not move a step without subjecting myself to a false imputation."

"Good night, my dear," said her aunt. "If he comes, I will take all imputations on myself."

But Mr. Carlisle did not come. Day passed after day; and the intense fear Eleanor had at first felt changed to a somewhat quieter anticipation; though she never came home from a ride without a good deal of circumspection about getting into the house. At last, one day when she was sitting with her aunt the messenger came from the post, and one of those letters was handed to Eleanor that she knew so well; with the proud seal and its crest. Particularly full and well made she thought this seal was; though that was not so very uncommon, and perhaps she was fanciful; but it was a magnificent seal, and the lines of the outer handwriting were very bold and firm. Eleanor's cheeks lost some colour as she opened the envelope, which she did without breaking the bright black wax. Her own letter was all the enclosure.

The root of wrong even unconsciously planted, will bear its own proper and bitter fruits; and Eleanor tasted them that day, and the next and the next. She was free; she was secure from even an attempt to draw her back into the bonds she had broken; when Mr. Carlisle's pride had taken up the question there was no danger of his ever relenting or faltering; and pride had thrown back

her letter of withdrawal in her face. She was free; but she knew she had given pain, and that more feeling was stung in Mr. Carlisle's heart than his pride.

"He will get over it, my dear," said her aunt coolly. But Eleanor shed many tears for a day or two, over the wrong she had done. Letters from Ivy Lodge did not help her.

"Home is very disagreeable now," wrote her little sister Julia; "mamma is crying half the day, and the other half she does not feel comfortable—" (a gentle statement of the case.) "And papa is very much vexed, and keeps out of doors the whole time and Alfred with him; and Mr. Rhys is gone away, and I have got nobody. I shouldn't know what to do, if Mr. Rhys had not taught me; but now I can pray. Dear Eleanor, do you pray? I wish you were coming home again, but mamma says you are not coming in a great while; and Mr. Rhys is never coming back. He said so."

Mrs. Powle's letter was in strict accordance with Julia's description of matters; desperately angry and mortified. The only comfort was, that in her mortification she desired Eleanor to keep away from home and out of her sight; so Eleanor with a certain rest of heart in spite of all, prepared herself for a long quiet sojourn with her aunt at the cheese-farm of Plassy. Mrs. Caxton composedly assured her that all this vexation would blow over; and Eleanor's own mind was soon fain to lay off its care and content itself in a nest of peace. Mrs. Caxton's house was that, to anybody worthy of enjoying it; and to Eleanor it had all the joy not only of fitness but of novelty. But for a lingering care on the subject of the other question that had occupied her, Eleanor would in a little while have been happier than at any former time in her life. How was it with that question, which had pressed so painfully hard during weeks and months past? now that leisure and opportunity were

full and broad to take it up and attend to it. So they were ; but with the removal of difficulty came in some degree the relaxing of effort ; opportunity bred ease. It was so simple a thing to be good at Plassy, that Eleanor's cry for it became less bitter. Mrs. Caxton's presence, words, and prayers, kept the thought constantly alive ; yet with more of soothing and hopeful than of exciting influence ; and while Eleanor constantly wished she were happy like her, she nevertheless did not fail to be happy in her own way.

The aunt and niece were excellently suited to each other, and took abundant delight in each other's company. Eleanor found that what had been defective in her own education was in the way to be supplied and made up to her singularly ; here, of all places, on a cheese-farm ! So it was. To her accomplishments and materials of knowledge, she now found suddenly super-added, the necessity and the practice of thinking. In Mrs. Caxton's house it was impossible to help it. Judgment, conscience, reason, and good sense, were constantly brought into play ; upon things already known and things until then not familiar. In the reading of books, of which they did a good deal ; in the daily discussion of the newspaper ; in the business of every hour, in the intercourse with every neighbour, Eleanor found herself always stimulated and obliged to look at things from a new point of view ; to consider them with new lights ; to try them by a new standard. As a living creature, made and put here to live for something, she felt herself now ; as in a world where everybody had like trusts to fulfil and was living mindful or forgetful of his trust. How mindful Mrs. Caxton was of hers, Eleanor began every day with increasing admiration to see more and more. To her servants, to her neighbours, with her money and her time and her sympathies, for little present interests and for world-wide and everlasting ones,

Mrs. Caxton was ever ready, active, watchful; hands full and head full and heart full. That motive power of her one mind and will, Eleanor gradually found, was the centre and spring of a vast machinery of good, working so quietly and so beneficently as proved it had been in operation a long, long time. It was a daily deep lesson to Eleanor, going deeper and deeper every day. The roots were striking down that would shoot up and bear fruit by and by.

Eleanor was a sweet companion to her aunt all those months. In her fresh, young, rich nature, Mrs. Caxton had presently seen the signs of strength, without which no character would have suited her; while Eleanor's temper was of the finest; and her mind went to work vigorously upon whatever was presented for its action. Mrs. Caxton wisely took care to give it an abundance of work; and furthermore employed Eleanor in busy offices of kindness and help to others; as an assistant in some of her own plans and habits of good. Many a ride Eleanor took on the Welsh pony, to see how some sick person was getting on, or to carry supplies to another, or to give instruction to another, or to oversee and direct the progress of matters on which yet another was engaged. This was not new work to her; yet now it was done in the presence at least, if not under the pressure, of a higher motive than she had been accustomed to bring to it. It took in some degree another character. Eleanor was never able to forget now that these people to whom she was ministering had more of the immortal in them than of even the earthly; she was never able to forget it of herself. And busy and happy as the winter was, there often came over her those weary longings for something which she had not yet; the something which made her aunt's course daily so clear and calm and bright. What sort of happiness would be Eleanor's when she got back to Ivy Lodge? She asked

herself that question sometimes. Her present happiness was superficial.

The spring meanwhile drew near, and signs of it began to be seen and felt, and heard. And one evening Mrs. Caxton got out the plan of her garden, and began to consider in detail its arrangements, with a view to coming operations. It was pleasant to see Mrs. Caxton at this work, and to hear her; she was in her element. Eleanor was much surprised to find not only that her aunt was her own head gardener, but that she had an exquisite knowledge of the business.

"This *sulphurea* I think is dead," remarked Mrs. Caxton. "I must have another. Eleanor—what is the matter?"

"Ma'am?"

"You are drawing a very long breath, my dear. Where did it come from?"

The reserve which Eleanor had all her life practised before other people, had almost from the first given way before her aunt.

"From a thought of home, aunt Caxton. I shall not be so happy when I get back there."

"The happiness that will not bear transportation, Eleanor, is a very poor article. But they will not want you at home."

"I am afraid of it."

"Without reason. You will not go home this spring, my dear; trust me. You are mine for a good long time yet."

Mrs. Caxton was wiser than Eleanor; as was soon proved. Mrs. Powle wrote, desiring her daughter, whatever she did, not to come home then; nor soon. People would think she was come home for her wedding; and questions innumerable would be asked, the mortification of which would be unbearable. Whereas, if Eleanor kept away, the dismal certainty would be by

degrees become public, that there was to be no match at all between Rythdale and the Lodge. "Stay away till it is all blown over, Eleanor," wrote her mother; "it is the least you can do for your family." And the squire even sent a word of a letter, more kind, but to the same effect. He wanted his bright daughter at home, he said; he missed her; but in the circumstances, perhaps it would be best, if her aunt would be so good as to keep her,—

Eleanor carried these letters to Mrs. Caxton, with a tear in her eye, and an humbled, pained face.

"I told you so," said her aunt. "How could people expect that Mr. Carlisle's marriage would take place three months after the death of his mother? that is what I do not understand."

"They arranged it so, and it was given out, I suppose. Everything gets known. He was going abroad in the spring, or immediately after; and meant not to go without me."

"Now you are my child, my dear, and shall help me with my roses," said her aunt kissing her, and taking Eleanor in her arms. "Eleanor, is that second question settled yet?"

"No, aunt Caxton."

"You have not chosen yet which master you will serve,—the world or the Lord?"

"O yes, ma'am—I have decided *that*. I know which I want to be."

"But not which you will be."

"I mean that, ma'am."

"You are not a servant of the Lord now, Eleanor?"

"No, aunt Caxton—I don't see how. I am dark."

"Christ says, 'He that is not with me is against me.' A question that is undecided, decides itself. Eleanor, decide this question to-night."

"To-night, ma'am?"

"Yes. I am going to send you to church."

"To church! There is no service to-night, aunt Caxton."

"Not at the church where you have been—in the village. There is a little church in the valley beyond Mrs. Pynce's cottage. You are going there."

"I do not remember any. Why aunt Caxton, the valley is too narrow there for anything but the road and the brook; the mountains leave no room—hardly room for her house."

"You have never been any further. Do you not remember a sharp turn just beyond that place?"

"Yes, I do."

"You will see the chapel when you get round the turn."

The place Mrs. Caxton alluded to, was a wild, secluded, most beautiful valley, the bottom of which as Eleanor said was almost filled up with the road, and the brook which rushed along its course to meet the river; itself almost as large as another river. Where the people could be found to go to a church in such a region, she could not imagine. Heather clothed the hills; fairy cascades leaped down the rocks at every turning, lovely as a dream; the whole scene was wild and lonely. Hardly any human habitations or signs of human action broke the wild reign of nature all the valley through. Eleanor was sure of a charming ride at least, whether there was to be a congregation in the church at the end of it or no; and she prepared herself accordingly. Mrs. Caxton was detained at home; the car did not go; three or four of the household, men and women, went on ponies as Eleanor did.

They set off very early, while the light was fair and beautiful yet, for the ride was of some length. It was not on the way to the village; it turned off from the fine high road to a less practised and more uneven track. It

was good for horses; and riding in front, a little ahead of her companions, Eleanor had the luxury of being alone. Why had Mrs. Caxton bade her "settle that question" to-night? How could she; when her mind was in so much darkness and confusion on the subject? Yet Eleanor hardly knew specifically what the hindrance was; only it was certain that while she wished and intended to be a Christian, she was no nearer the point, so far as she could see, than she had been months ago. Nay, Eleanor confessed to herself that in the sweet quiet and peace of her aunt's house, and in her own release from pressing trouble, she had rather let all troublesome thoughts slip away from her; so that, though not forgotten, the subject had been less painfully on her mind than through the weeks that went before her coming to Plassy. She had wished for leisure and quiet to attend to it and put that pain to rest for ever; and in leisure and quiet she had suffered pain to go to sleep in a natural way and left all the business of dealing with it to be deferred till the time of its waking. How was all this? Eleanor walked her pony slowly along, and thought. *Then* she had been freshly under the influence of Mr. Rhys and his preaching; the very remembrance of which, now and here, stirred her like an alarum bell. Ay, and more than that; it wakened the keen longing for that beauty and strength of life which had so shewn her her own poverty. Humbled and sad, Eleanor walked her pony on and on, while each little crystal torrent that came with its sweet clear rush and sparkle down the rocks, tinkled its own little silver bell note in her ears; a note of purity and action. Eleanor had never heard it from them before; now somehow each rushing streamlet, with its bright leap over obstacles and its joyous dash onward in its course, sounded the same note. Nothing could be more lovely than these cascades; every one different from the others, as

if to shew how many forms of beauty water could take. Eleanor noticed and heard them every one and the call of every one, and rode on in a pensive mood till Mrs. Pynce's cottage was passed and the turn in the valley just beyond opened up a new scene for her.

How lovely! how various! The straitened dell spread out gradually from this point into a comparatively broad valley, bordered with higher hills as it widened in the distance. The light still shewed its entrancing beauty; wooded, and spotted with houses and habitations of all kinds; from the very humble to the very lordly, and from the business factories of to-day, back to the ruined strongholds of the time when war was business. Wide and delicious the view was, as much as it was unexpected; and spring's softened colouring was all over it. Eleanor made a pause of a few seconds as soon as all this burst upon her; her next thought was to look for the church. And it was plain to see; a small dark edifice, in excellent keeping with its situation; because of its colour and its simple structure, which half merged it among the rocks and the hills.

"That is the church, John?" Eleanor said to Mrs. Caxton's factotum.

"That is it, ma'am. There's been no minister there for a good piece of the year back."

"And what place is this?"

"There's no *place*, to call it, ma'am. It's the valley of Glanog."

Eleanor jumped off her pony and went into the church. She had walked her pony too much; it was late; the service had begun; and Eleanor was taken with a sudden tremor at hearing the voice that was reading the hymn. She had no need to look to see whose it was. She walked up the aisle, seeking a vacant place to sit down, and exceedingly desirous to find it, for she was conscious that she was right under the preacher's eye and observa-

tion ; but as one never does well what one does in confusion, she overlooked one or two chances that offered, and did not get a seat till she was far forward, in the place of fullest view for both seeing and being seen. And there she sat down, asking herself what should make her tremble so. Why had her aunt Caxton sent her that evening, alone, to hear Mr. Rhys preach ? And why not ? what was there about it ? She was very glad, she knew, to hear him ; but there would be no more apathy or languor in her mind now on the subject of that question her aunt had desired her to settle. No more. The very sound of that speaker's voice woke her conscience to a sharp sense of what she had been about all these months since she had heard it last. She bent her head in her hand for a little while, in a rushing of thoughts—or ideas—that prevented her senses from acting ; then the words the people were singing around her made their entrance into her ear ; an entrance opened by the sweet melody. The words were given very plain.

“ No room for mirth or trifling here,
For worldly hope, or worldly fear,
If life so soon is gone ;
If now the Judge is at the door,
And all mankind must stand before
Th' inexorable throne !

“ No matter which my thoughts employ,
A moment's misery or joy ;
But O ! when both shall end,
Where shall I find my destined place ?
Shall I my everlasting days
With fiends or angels spend ? ”

Eleanor sat cowering before that thought. “ Now are we going to have a *terrible* sermon ? ” was her inward question. She would not look up. The prelimi-

nary services were all over, she found, and the preacher rose and gave out his text.

"A glorious high throne from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary."

Eleanor could not keep her eyes lowered another second. The well-known deliberate utterance, and a little unconscious indefinable ring of the tones in which the words were spoken, brought her eyes to the speaker's face; and they were never turned away again. "Do we need a sanctuary?"—was the first question the preacher started; and very quietly he went on to discuss that. Very quietly; his manner and his voice were neither in the slightest degree excited; how it was, Eleanor did not know, that as he went on a tide of feeling swept over the assembly. She could see it in the evidences of tears, and she heard it in a deep sigh of the breath that went all over the house. The preacher was reaching each one's secret consciousness, and stirring into life that deep hidden want of every heart which every heart knew differently. Some from sorrow; some from sin; some from weariness; some from loneliness; some from the battle of life; some from the struggle with their own hearts; all, from the wrath to come. Nay, Eleanor's own heart was throbbing with the sense that he had reached it and touched it, and knew its condition. How was it, that with those quiet words he had bowed every spirit before him, her own among the number? It is true, that in the very containedness of his tones and words there was an evidence of suppressed power; it flashed out once in a while; and wrought possibly with the more effect from the feeling that it was contained and kept down. However it were, the minds of the assembly were already at a high state of tension, when he passed to the other part of his subject—the consideration of the sanctuary. It was no discourse of regular heads and divisions; it is impossible to report,

except as to its effects. The preacher's head and heart were both full, and words had no stint. But in this latter part of his subject, the power which had been so contained was let loose, though still kept within bounds. The eye fired now, and the voice quivered with its charge, as he endeavoured to set before the minds of the people the glorious vision which filled his own; to make known to others the "riches of glory" in which his own soul rested and rejoiced. So evidently, that his hearers half caught at what he would shew them, by the catching of sympathy; and from different parts of the house now there went up a suppressed cry, of want, or of exultation, as the case might be, which it was very thrilling to hear. It was the sense of want and pain in Eleanor's mind; not spoken indeed except by her countenance; but that toned strongly with the notes of feeling that were uttered around her. As from the bottom of a dark abyss into which he had fallen, a person might look up to the bright sky, of which he could see but a little, which yet would give him token of all the firmamental light and beauty up there which he had not. From her darkness Eleanor saw it; saw it in the preacher's face and words; yes, and heard it in many a deep-breathed utterance of gladness or thanksgiving at her side. She had never felt so dark in her life as when she left the church. She rushed away as soon as the service was over, lest any one should speak to her; however she had to wait some time outside the door before John came out. The people all tarried strangely.

"Beg pardon, ma'am," said John, "but we was waiting a bit to see the minister."

Eleanor rode home fast, through fair moonlight without and great obscurity within her own spirit. She avoided her aunt; she did not want to speak of the meeting; she succeeded in having no talk about it that night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"I glanced within a rock's cleft breast,
A lonely, safely-sheltered nest.
There as successive seasons go,
And tides alternate ebb and flow,
Full many a wing is trained for flight
In heaven's blue field—in heaven's broad light."

THE next morning at breakfast Eleanor and her aunt were alone as usual. There was no avoiding anything.

"Did you have a pleasant evening?" Mrs. Caxton asked.

"I had a very pleasant ride, aunt Caxton."

"How was the sermon?"

"It was—I suppose it was very good; but it was very peculiar."

"In what way?"

"I don't know, ma'am;—it excited the people very much. They could not keep still."

"Do you like preaching better that does not excite people?"

Eleanor hesitated. "No, ma'am; but I do not like them to make a noise."

"What sort of a noise?"

Eleanor paused again, and to her astonishment found her own lip quivering and her eyes watering as she answered,—“It was a noise of weeping and of shouting—not loud shouting; but that is what it was.”

"I have often known such effects under faithful presenting of the truth," said Mrs. Caxton composedly.

"When people's feelings are much moved, it is very natural to give them expression."

"For uncultivated people, particularly."

"I don't know about the cultivation," said Mrs. Caxton. "Robert Hall's sermons used to leave two thirds of his hearers on their feet. I have seen a man in middle life, a judge in the courts, one of the heads of the community in which he lived, so excited that he could not undo the fastenings of his pew door; and he put his foot on the seat and sprang over into the aisle."

"Do you like such things, aunt Caxton?"

"I prefer another mode of getting out of church, my dear."

"But shouting, or crying out, is what people of refinement would not do, even if they could not open their pew doors."

Eleanor was a little sorry the moment she had uttered this speech; her spirits were in a whirl of disorder and uncomfortableness, and she had spoken hastily. Mrs. Caxton answered with great composure.

"What do you call those words that you are accustomed to hear, the 'Gloria in Excelsis'?—'Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace, good will towards men. We praise thee, we bless thee, we worship thee, we glorify thee, we give thanks to thee for thy great glory, O Lord God, heavenly King.'"

"What do *you* call it, aunt Caxton?"

"If it is not a shout of joy, I can make nothing of it. Or the one hundred and fiftieth psalm—'O praise God in his holiness; praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him in his noble acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him in the sound of the trumpet; praise him upon the lute and harp. Praise him in the cymbals and dances; praise him upon the strings and pipe. Praise him upon the well tuned cymbals; praise him upon the loud cymbals. Let every

thing that hath breath praise the Lord.'—What is that but a shout of praise?"

"It never sounded like a shout," said Eleanor.

"It did once, I think," said Mrs. Caxton.

"When was that, ma'am?"

"When Ezra sang it, with the priests and the people to help him, after they were returned from captivity. Then the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off. All the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord."

"But aunt Caxton," said Eleanor, who felt herself taken down a little, as a secure talker is apt to be by a manner very composed in his opponent—"it is surely the habit of refined persons in these times not to get excited—or not to express their feelings very publicly?"

"A very good habit," said Mrs. Caxton. "Nevertheless I have seen a man—a gentleman—and a man in very high standing, in a public assembly, go white with anger and become absolutely speechless, with the strength of passion, at some offence he had taken."

"O such passions, of course, will display themselves sometimes," said Eleanor. "Bad passions often will. They escape control."

"I have seen a lady—a lovely and refined lady—faint away at the sudden tidings that a child's life was secure,—whom she had almost given up for lost."

"But, dear aunt Caxton! you do not call that a parallel case?"

"A parallel case with what?"

"Anybody might be excited at such a thing. You would wonder if they were not."

"I do not see the justness of your reasoning, Eleanor. A man may turn white with passion, and it is natural; a woman may faint with joy at receiving back her child from death; and you are not surprised. But the joy of suddenly seeing *eternal* life one's own—the joy of know-

ing that God has forgiven our sins—you think may be borne calmly. I have known people faint under that joy as well."

"Aunt Caxton," said Eleanor, her voice growing hoarse, "I do not see how anybody can have it. How can they *know* their sins are forgiven?"

"You may find it in your Bible, Eleanor; did you never see it there? 'The Spirit witnesseth with our spirit, that we are the children of God.'"

"But Paul was inspired?"

"Yes, thank God!—to declare that dividend of present joy to all shareholders in the stock of eternal life. But doubtless, only faith can take it out."

Eleanor sat silent, chewing bitter thoughts. "O this is what these people have!"—she said to herself;—"this is the helmet of salvation! And I am as far from it as ever!" The conversation ended there. Eleanor was miserable all day. She did not explain herself; Mrs. Caxton only saw her preoccupied, moody, and silent.

"There is preaching again at Glanog to-night," she said a few days afterwards; "I am not yet quite well enough to go. Do you choose to go, Eleanor?"

Eleanor looked down and answered yes.

She went; and again, and again, and again. Sundays or week days, Eleanor missed no chance of riding her pony to the little valley church. Mrs. Caxton generally went with her, after the first week; but going in her car she was no hindrance to the thoughtfulness and solitude of the rides on horseback; and Eleanor sometimes wept all the way home, and oftener came with a confused pain in her heart, dull or acute as the case might be. She saw truth that seemed beautiful and glorious to her; she saw it in the faces and lives as well as in the words of others; she longed to share their immunity and the peace she perceived them possessed of; but how to lay hold of it she could not find. She

seemed to herself too evil ever to become good ; she tried, but her heart seemed as hard as a stone. She prayed, but no relief came. She did not see how she *could* be saved, while evil had such a hold of her ; and to dislodge it she was powerless. Eleanor was in a constant state of uneasiness and distress now. Her usually fine temper was more easily roughened than she had ever known it ; the services she had long been accustomed to render to others who needed her, she felt it now very hard to give. She was dissatisfied with herself and very unhappy, and she said to herself that she was unfit to properly minister to anybody else. She became a comparatively silent and ungenial companion to her aunt. Mrs. Caxton perhaps understood her ; for she made no remark on this change, seemed to take no notice ; was as evenly and tenderly affectionate to her niece as ever before, with perhaps a little added expression of sympathy now and then. She did not even ask an explanation of Eleanor's manner of getting out of church.

Eleanor and her aunt, as it happened, always occupied a seat very near the front and almost under the pulpit. It had been Eleanor's custom ever since the first time she came there, to slip out of her seat and make her way down the aisle with eager though quiet haste ; leaving her aunt to follow at her leisure ; and she was generally mounted and off before Mrs. Caxton reached the front door. During the service always now, Eleanor's eyes were fastened upon the preacher ; his often looked at her ; he recognized her of course ; and Eleanor had a vague fear that if she were not out of the way he would some time or other come down and accost her. It was an unreasoning fear ; she gave no account of it to herself ; except that her mind was in an unsettled, out-of-order state, that would not bear questioning ; and if he came he would be certain to question her. So Eleanor

fled and let her aunt do the talking—if any there were. Eleanor never asked and never knew.

This went on for some weeks. Spring had burst upon the hills, and the valleys were green in beauty and flushing with flowers; and Eleanor's heart was barren and cold more than she had ever felt it to be. She began to have a most miserable opinion of herself.

It happened one night, what rarely happened, that Mr Rhys had some one in the pulpit with him. Eleanor was sorry; she grudged to have even the closing prayer or hymn given by another voice. But it was so this evening; and when Eleanor rose as usual to make her quick way out of the house, she found that somebody else had been quick. Mr. Rhys stood beside her. It was impossible to help speaking. He had clearly come down for the very purpose. He shook hands with Eleanor.

"How do you do?" he said. "I am glad to see you here. Is your mind at rest yet?"

"No," said Eleanor. However it was, this meeting which she had so shunned, was not entirely unwelcome to her when it came. If anything would make her feel better, or any counsel do her good, she was willing to stand even questioning that might lead to it. Mr. Rhys's questioning on this occasion was not very severe. He only asked her, "Have you ever been to class?"

"To what?" said Eleanor.

"To a class-meeting. You know what that is?"

"Yes,—I know a little. No, I have never been to one."

"I should like to see you at mine. We meet at Mrs. Powlis's in the village of Plassy, Wednesday afternoon."

"But I could not Mr. Rhys. It would not be possible for me to say a word before other people; it would not be possible."

"I will try not to trouble you with difficult questions. Promise me that you will come. It will not hurt you to hear others speak."

Eleanor hesitated.

"Will you come and try?"

"Yes."

"There!" said Eleanor to herself as she rode away,—
"now I have got my head in a net, and I am fast. *I* going to such a place! What business have I there?"—
And yet there was a secret gratification in the hope that somehow this new plan might bring her good. But on the whole Eleanor disliked it excessively, with all the power of nature and cultivation. For though frank enough to those whom she loved, a proud reserve was Eleanor's nature in regard to all others whom she did not love; and the habits of her life were as far as possible at variance with this proposed meeting, in its familiar and social religious character. She could not conceive how people should wish to speak of their intimate feelings before other people. Her own shrank from exposure as morbid flesh shrinks from the touch. However, Wednesday came.

"Can I have Powis this afternoon, aunt Caxton?"

"Certainly, my dear; no need to ask. Powis is yours. Are you going to Mrs. Pynce?"

"No ma'am.—" Eleanor struggled.—"Mr. Rhys has made me promise to go to his class. I do not like to go at all; but I have promised."

"You will like to go next time," said Mrs. Caxton quietly. And she said no more than that.

"Will I?" thought Eleanor as she rode away. But if there was anything harsh or troubled in her mood of mind, all nature breathed upon it to soften it. The trees were leafing out again; the meadows brilliant with fresh green; the soft spring airs wooing into full blush and beauty the numberless spring flowers; every breath fragrant with new sweetness. Nothing could be lovelier than Eleanor's ride to the village; nothing more soothing to a ruffled condition of thought; and she arrived

at Mrs. Powlis's door with an odd kind of latent hopefulness that something good might be in store for her there.

Her strange and repugnant feelings returned when she got into the house. She was shewn into a room where several other persons were sitting, and where more kept momentarily coming in. Greetings passed between these persons, very frank and cordial; they were all at home there and accustomed to each other and to the business; Eleanor alone was strange, unwonted, not in her element. That feeling however changed as soon as Mr. Rhys came in. Where he was, there was at least one person with whom she had sympathy, and who had some little degree of sympathy with her. Eleanor's feelings were destined to go through a course of discipline before the meeting was over.

It began with some very sweet singing. There were no books; everybody knew the words that were sung, and they burst out like a glad little chorus. Eleanor's lips only were mute. The prayer that followed stirred her very much. It was so simple, so pure, so heavenward in its aspirations, so human in its humbleness, so touching in its sympathies. For they reached *her*, Eleanor knew by one word. And when the prayer was ended, whatever might follow, Eleanor was glad she had come to that class-meeting.

But what followed she found to be intensely interesting. In words, some few some many, one after another of the persons present gave an account of his progress or of his standing in the Christian life. Each spoke only when called upon by Mr. Rhys; and each was answered in his turn with a word of counsel or direction or encouragement, as the case seemed to need. Sometimes the answer was in the words of the Bible; but always, whatever it were, it was given, Eleanor felt, with singular appositeness to the interests before him. With

great skill too, and with infinite sympathy and tenderness if need called for it; with sympathy invariably. And Eleanor admired the apt readiness and kindness and wisdom with which the answers were framed; so as to suggest without fail the lesson desired to be given, yet so suggest that it should be felt by nobody as an imputation or a rebuke. And ever and again the little assembly broke out into a burst of song, a verse or two of some hymn, that started naturally from the last words that had been said. Those bursts of song touched Eleanor. They were so plainly heartfelt, so utterly glad in their utterances, that she had never heard the like. No choir, the best trained in the world, could give such an effect with their voices, unless they were also trained and meet to be singers in heaven. One of the choruses pleased Eleanor particularly. It was sung in a wild sweet tune, and with great energy.

"There's balm in Gilead,
To make the wounded whole.
There's power enough in Jesus—
To save a sin-sick soul."

It was just after this was finished, that Mr. Rhys in his moving about the room came and stood before Eleanor. He asked her "Do you love Jesus?"

It is impossible to express the shame and sorrow with which Eleanor answered, "No."

"Do you wish to be a Christian?"

Eleanor bowed her head.

"Do you *intend* to be one?"

Eleanor looked up, surprised at the word, and answered, "If I can."

"Do you think," said he very tenderly, "that you have a right to that '*if*'—when Jesus has said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*'?"

He turned from her and again struck the notes they had been singing.

"There's balm in Gilead—
To make the wounded whole.
There's power enough in Jesus
To save a sin-sick soul."

The closing prayer followed, which almost broke Eleanor's heart in two; it so dealt with her and for her. While some of those present were afterward exchanging low words and shakes of the hand, she slipped away and mounted her pony.

She was in dreadful confusion during the first part of her ride. Half resentful, half broken-hearted. It was the last time, she said to herself, that ever she would be found in a meeting like that. She would never go again; to make herself a mark for people's sympathy and a subject for people's prayers. And yet—surely the human mind seems an inconsistent thing at times,—the thought of that sympathy and those prayers had a touch of sweetness in it, which presently drew a flood of tears from Eleanor's eyes. There was one old man in particular, of venerable appearance, who had given a most dignified testimony of faith and happiness, whose "Amen!" recurred to her. It was uttered at the close of a petition Mr. Rhys had made in her favour; and Eleanor recalled it now with a strange mixture of feelings. Why was she so different from him and from the rest of those good people? She knew her duty; why was it not done? She seemed to herself more hard hearted and evil than Eleanor would formerly have supposed possible of her; she had never liked herself less than she did during this ride home. Her mind was in a rare turmoil, of humiliation and darkness and sorrow; one thing only was clear; that she never would go to a class-meeting again! And yet it would be wrong to say that

she was on the whole sorry she had gone once, or that she really regretted anything that had been done or said. But this once should suffice her. So she went along, dropping tears from her eyes and letting Powis find his way as he pleased; which he was quite competent to do.

By degrees her eyes cleared to see how lovely the evening was falling. The air sweet with exhalations from the hedge-rows and meadows, yes and from the more distant hills too; fragrant and balmy. The cattle were going home from the fields; smoke curled up from a hundred chimney tops along the hillsides and the valley bottom; the evening light spread here and there in a broad glow of colour; fair snatches of light were all that in many a place the hills and the bottom could catch. Every turn in the winding valley brought a new combination of wonderful beauty into view; and shadows and light, and flower-fragrance, and lowing cattle along the ways, and wreaths of chimney smoke; all spoke of peace. Could the spell help reaching anybody's heart? It reached Eleanor's; or her mood in some inexplicable way soothed itself down; for when she reached the farmhouse, though she thought of herself in the same humbled forlorn way as ever, her thought of the class-meeting had changed.

END OF VOL. I.



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